The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (1991-2003)

Matteo Fumagalli

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The following dissertation is the result of my own work only, unless otherwise acknowledged.

(Matteo Fumagalli)

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the strategies and forms of Uzbek ethno-political mobilization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In particular, the research asks why Uzbek communities in those two countries did not resort to ethnically motivated violence as many either predicted or feared, but have instead turned to a "quiet politics" of identity and ethnicity.

Reconciling state and national identities has proved remarkably complex in Central Asia, given that all the five republics in the region are home to a largely heterogeneous population. Understanding what place state elites have allocated to non titular groups, and how these relate themselves to the new polity offers an interesting vantage point on the process of post-Soviet transformation. This is particularly the case as ethnic minority mobilization represents a relatively unexplored field of research in scholarship on post-communist Eurasia. This dissertation seeks to fill the gap in this area by developing a focused comparison of Uzbek minorities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan from 1991 until 2003.

Through a combination of various quantitative (small-scale surveys) and qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis) structural, ideational, and agential factors are taken into account. It is the contention of this thesis that Uzbek political behaviour can be explained as a product of a strategic calculation by the leaders of the Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that any change in the administration would leave them "worse off", despite existing and un-addressed political and cultural demands. This has shaped a counter-intuitive type of mobilization, supportive of the status quo in the state structure of power. A focus on ideas and agency also accounts for variations between the two cases. In particular group leadership appears more articulate and vocal in Kyrgyzstan, whereas it lies in a state of virtual collapse in Tajikistan. A change-adverse strategy among Uzbeks should not be seen as a permanent condition, though. Especially if grievances are not met, Uzbek loyalty should no longer be taken for granted, as recent evens in Kyrgyzstan appear to suggest.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Quiet Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Are Uzbeks "at a cusp"[1] or at home abroad?

This study investigates Uzbek ethno-political mobilization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Despite initial predictions (Olcott, 1992a and 1992b; Carlisle, 1995; Rumer and Rumer, 1992) and later warnings (Lubin and Rubin, 1999; Khamidov, 2000; Tabyshalieva et al., 1998 and 1999) that un-addressed political and economic grievances and the presence of ethnic minorities spanning contested borders constituted a potentially explosive combination in the heart of Central Asia[2], Uzbek communities in those two countries have not resorted to violence, but turned to a "quiet politics"[3] of identity and ethnicity.

In particular the study seeks to understand how Uzbeks living outwith Uzbekistan have adjusted to being "at home abroad" and how their condition of marginality living "at a cusp" between polities embarked in competing state- and nation-building processes has affected their participation in political life. In order to do so the *identities* and *strategies* that Uzbeks abroad have adopted, the *forms* of their participation, and the way they *react to* and *interact with* the surrounding context within which they operate are examined in the following chapters.

All these aspects come to define and identify the process of Uzbek ethno-political mobilization. Political mobilization here refers to "the actors' effort to influence the existing distribution of power" (Nedelman 1987, p.181). What is

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[1]In his study of Osh Uzbeks Morgan Liu refers to the Uzbek condition of "non-belonging", at a cusp between the nationalising policies of Kyrgyzstan who sees them with suspicion out of fear that they may act as Uzbekistan's fifth colum and hence marginalises them, and the latter state, which does not regard them as part of the self (2002).

[2]Nick Megoran was one of the rare observers in counter-tendency at the time. In his brief essay appropriately titled *Calming the Ferghana Valley Experts* Megoran (2000c) notes how emphasis on the conflict potential of the region – parallel to a downplaying of positive developments – risks turning into a self-fulling prophecy.

[3]By quiet I mean both non-violent and characterised by low mobilizational level. I return to this question later in this chapter.

crucial is that action in this case comprises the actors' efforts to legitimise the existing distribution of power, and also encompasses activities aiming to redistribute power or reshape the basis of the power structure within a society. A particular type of mobilization is of interest here: ethno-political mobilization, a form of mobilization where group identity (here, ethnic) is used as a base for collective action (Tilly 1991, p.574). The study compares and contrasts two case studies, those of Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani Uzbeks through an in-depth focused comparison.

1.1 The new others: Identity transformation among post-Soviet co-ethnics

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought with it the stranding of millions of co-ethnics, large communities of people sharing a common ethnic bond with others living "on the wrong side of the border". Over seventy million people (out of nearly three hundred million), nearly one in four Soviet citizens[4], found themselves in a country where they constituted new minorities. The driving force behind this phenomenon was a mismatch between borders and peoples: these new "beached diasporas" as Pal Kolstø labelled this new category of peoples, were not the product of mass migrations (movement of peoples across borders), but, of the *"movement of borders across settlements"* (1999).

A question that arose in the early stages of this research and indeed was echoed in academic circles is how to refer to such communities. Diaspora was the term that met with consensus among post-Soviet authorities (ie state administration, the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan and media alike) as well as within academic circles abroad (Bohr, 1998; Melvin, 2000; Horsman, 1999a). International organizations (OSCE, UN) seemed to prefer "national minority", whereas others (Olimov and Olimova, 2002) suggested they should be referred to as irredenta, distinguishable from diasporas proper by the lack of forcible migration and history of settlement in a particular area. I have found concepts such as transnationalism and, especially "hybridity" appropriate to grasp the process of re-definition, re-negotiation and contestation of identity/-ies taking place in the new states of Eurasia. In

[4]According to the 1989 Soviet census the number of people residing outside the borders of their alleged homeland (internal or external to the Soviet Union) amounted to a stunning 71,191,055 (Vestnik Statistiki, 1990-1991).

particular I have been influenced by Clifford (1994), Anthias (1998, 2001), and Stuart Hall's re-conceptualisation of diasporas and diasporic identities (1990). Crucial in their analysis is the rejection of that essentialism typical of mainstream diaspora studies (Sheffer, 1986 and 2003) which ultimately reifies these groups on the basis of their fitting into a category. What matters is whether the group perceives itself and constructs its identity as diasporic, or whether it is constructed as such by the "external homeland" [5] (here, Uzbekistan) or the country of residence (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Equally important is the emphasis of "new diaspora studies" on the fragmentation, overlapping, and multiplicity of identities.

The archetypical example of these "new diasporas" is represented by those Russian communities scattered all across the fourteen non Russian former Soviet republics. Neil Melvin (1995, p.9) correctly emphasises that that this broad group of peoples does not include ethnic Russians only. It comprises Belarusians, Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, and Koreans, that with time have abandoned their native tongue to become linguistically and culturally Russified. In most cases the group includes communites of non indigenous populations that have forcibly or voluntarily re-settled away from their region of origin. Hence the more appropriate terminology of "Russified settler communities" (ibid.). Literature on the topic is understandably expanding[6] given the size of these communities (twenty-five million, located in all the fourteen non Russian republics) and the identity of the external homeland (the Russian Federation). Scholars have alternatively focused on the significance of the emergence of these new minorities for the newly formed state (Smith, 1997; Smith and Wilson, 1997; Chinn and Kaiser, 1996) and its importance for the domestic politics of the external homeland (Melvin, 1995), and a number of authors have thoroughly analysed the multiplicity of trajectories in the process of identity transformation of the Russian-speaking population, and the implications thereof for the relations between the state of residence and minority group (Commercio, 2003;

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[5]The term external homeland, popularised by Rogers Brubaker in his "triadic nexus" model (1996) is used here for analytical purposes to identify one key actor in a potential, though not necessary and not assumed, triadic relationship (the nexus being between minority, nationalising state and external homeland). That the homeland perceives itself as such vis-à-vis the co-ethnics living abroad, or that the latter construct their identity as diasporic and look at the country on the other side of the border is something that has to be determined empirically, rather than assumed theoretically.

[6]Chinn and Kaiser (1996), Laitin (1998), King and Melvin (1998 and 2000), Kolstø (1996, 1999, 2000, 2001), Melvin (1995, 1998), Smith and Wilson (1997), Zevelev (2001), and Commercio (2003).

Kolstø, 1996). This has meant recognising in turn the agency of the group (Kolstø again, but also Zevelev, 2001 and Melvin, 1995), and on other occasions the over-arching structural externalities of state policies (nationalising policies, homeland's diaspora policy, as in the case of Smith and Wilson, 1997; and Smith et al., 1998).

Russified settler communities are by far the most visible, though not the only examples of post-Soviet diasporas. Armenians, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Tatars, among others also existed in the Soviet Union as officially recognised titular nations and un-recognised "internal diasporas" (internal to the Soviet Union)[7]. The absence of "real borders" between Union republics made the geographical distribution of ethnic groups somewhat irrelevant in Soviet times, but particularly problematic in the post-Soviet era. The changes that have affected these communities are far-ranging and have impacted upon their identity self-perception, legal status, psychological conditions, and also their political and economic situations in the new countries. In most cases all the individuals residing in a given Union republic were granted citizenship. This was not the norm everywhere, though. In a radical act of redress of perceived past injustices Latvia and Estonia denied the large Russian-speaking communities living in their territory the status of citizen and the political and civil rights entailed by this status (Galbreath, forthcoming; Melvin, 1995 and 1998). Thousands of people were turned from citizens into denizens, allowed to reside, but deprived of certain political and civil rights. Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have granted their Russian-speaking populations the possibility of dual citizenship (the country of residence and Russia's[8]). Uzbekistan has pushed for its ethnic Tajik citizens to enter "Uzbek nationality" in the passport's apposite entry and census, thereby forcibly shrinking the otherwise large Tajik presence in the country (Foltz, 1996; Horsman, 2001). Elsewhere all individuals residing in the republic at the time of independence were granted citizen status.

Legal parity did not secure absolute equality in practice, though, and this constitutes the starting point of this study: understanding how the profound changes in boundaries, status, policies and practices brought about by the collapse of the

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[7]External diasporas included, for example, Uzbeks living in Turkey or Saudi Arabia, Ukrainians in Canada, and so forth.

[8]In June 2003 Turkmenistan has not renewed the ten-year agreement with Russia and the few Russians that had remained in the country were given the option to choose between leaving the country (for Russia, presumably) or staying with Turkmen citizenship only (Torbakov, 2003).

Soviet order have affected those who overnight became the "new others", those against whom the new polities defined themselves in search of their own post-Soviet identity. Furthermore, the creation of new education systems and curricula, the radical changes in language policy and the establishment of barb-wired borders put a halt to the regular flow of bureaucrats, politicians, tradesmen, students and academics across republican borders[9]. If being Uzbek in Turkmenistan or in Uzbekistan mattered only to some extent in Soviet times, being part of a non titular group in a post-Soviet state carried significant consequences in terms of status as well as employment opportunities and even just communication possibilities. At first glance it appears that the new Central Asian polities could be referred to as "nationalising states" (Smith et al, 1998), which Rogers Brubaker defines as polities, established as *the states of and for the nations after which they were named* (1996 p.9). This study shows that neat categorizations tend to be rather misleading as they conceal more than they reveal. When policies appeared to be enhancing the status of the titular group such as in the case of language laws in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, practices intervened to moderate them (as Russian remained widely spoken in those countries). On other occasions, policies were introduced to safeguard the position of non titular groups, as in the case of land distribution in Kyrgyzstan, when the then president Akaev vetoed a proposal to ensure that land be distributed by privileging Kyrgyz over Uzbeks, Russians and other non titular groups. Regardless of how the newly independent states might be categorised, they all faced a similarly crucial dilemma: defining what the nation was, who belonged to it and who did not. Were minority groups expected to become part of the nation's new post-Soviet self, assimilate, integrate, or were they unwelcome temporary guests?

The dissertation discusses this question by looking at the perspectives of minority groups themselves and exploring how, within the context they found themselves, they adjusted to their new condition of being "at home abroad". What matters is not just the process of identity transformation that these communities have undertaken, but also the implications of this identity re-positioning in terms of the political status and behaviour of the group.

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[9]However, I am not suggesting that the flow entirely stopped. In fact, not only shuttle trade continues, but so does cross-border human trafficking. Despite a tightened visa regime I managed to rely on local expediencies and practices to pass through Uzbekistan's various borders on more than one occasion.

1.2 Mobilization in post-Soviet Central Asia: Dogs that bark, dogs that bite, and silent dogs

Scholars have become increasingly interested in explaining the various cases of nationalist mobilization in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet era in post-communist Central Eurasia (Beissinger, 2002; Critchlow, 1991; Schatz, 1999; Smith and Wilson, 1997). Whilst nationalist mobilization led to mass demonstrations and street protests throughout the former Soviet Union, Central Asia hardly witnessed any such activity. In striking contrast to what happened in Central-Eastern Europe where the fall of state socialism "paved the way for political participation and contentious collective action" (Ekiert and Kubik, 1998 p.545), public participation in Central Asia, already low in Soviet times, continued to be so in the post-independence period. The case of enviro-nationalist movements such as the Nevada-Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan shows that some form of popular mobilization did take place (Schatz, 1999). Environmental protection and language revival became the foci of intellectual attention and the frames through which the wider population became mobilised in Central Asia. Indeed from the 1986 Alma-Ata riots to the 1990 June events in Osh and Uzgen small-scale violent episodes took place in the region (see table below). Though these could be seen as manifestations of socio-economic grievances (with ethnicity being the way the conflict manifested itself rather than the root cause thereof), they did not appear to bode well for Central Asian republics and societies.

Table 1.1. Riots in 1989-1990: Bleak prospects for Central Asia?

Year	*Location*
February and May 1989	Dushanbe, TJK
May 1989	Ashkhabad and Nebit Dağ, TKM
May and June 1989	Ferghana Valley, UZB
June 1989	Noviy Uzen', KZ
February 1990	Dushanbe, TJK
February 1990	Buk, UZB
March 1990	Parkent, UZB
May 1990	Andijan, UZB
December 1990	Namangan, UZB
June 1990	Osh and Uzgen, KG

Source: Ro'i (1995 p.23).

Overall, however, Central Asia remained at the margins of the various waves of mobilization and as a consequence so did research on mobilizational processes in

the region. I do not dispute the fact that a study of successful examples of mobilization (the Gellnerian "dogs of nationalism" biting or barking) is heuristically useful, and perhaps even of more immediate interest than the case of the so-called "silent dogs", all those groups who, expectedly or unexpectedly, did not mobilize and remained inertial, passive or who sought to mobilize, but failed. However, I fully agree with Pauline Jones Luong that a study of mobilization should account for cases where it occurs and for those where *it does not* (2002): the "silent dogs". Mis-predicted or unexpected cases of mobilization/failure thereof can shed significant insight as to how the mobilizational process works. In a seminal work on nationalist mobilization in the late Soviet era, Mark Beissinger considers both successes and failures of nationalist mobilization, although he primarily discusses the former. None the less, Beissinger acknowledges that an explanatory and predictive model cannot neglect the "anomalous or mis-predicted cases" (ibid., p.203 and 222). These include cases of unpredicted successful mobilization (i.e. Abkhaz, Gagauz, Bashkir, Tuvans, and Turkmen), but also the "failures", examples of groups expected to mobilise that actually did not (Belarusians, Uzbeks and Volga Tatars). As Beissinger's research shows, Central Asia remained by and large quiet on the eve of the Soviet collapse and in the early post-independence phase. The tides of nationalism that had spread across other areas of the former Soviet space barely touched the region. However, this should not be read, Beissinger suggests, as an indication that mobilization did not occur at all in Central Asia. Rather, to follow Beissinger's typology, the Central Asian movements would constitute examples of "mobilizational failure, but political issue success" because the issues raised by the small intellectual circles were later appropriated by the ruling elite and incorporated in state policy.

The problem here is that scholarly attention has thus far concentrated almost exclusively - with the notable exception of the Russian diasporas - on the mobilization of titular groups: Kazakhs in Kazakhstan (Akiner, 1997; Schatz, 1999), Uzbeks in Uzbekistan (Carlisle, 1991; Critchlow, 1991) and so forth. Ethnic minorities have remained at the periphery of scholarship on post-Soviet mobilization and this can be ascribed to the low mobilizational level of these communities. Although partly correct, this does not explain one crucial gap in the literature: if

minority groups such as Uzbeks and Tajiks, were expected to mobilize, but did not, what did they do? They did not seem to develop mass forms of mobilization against the state. Neither did they gather in mass street demonstrations in defense of cultural rights or to advance political and economic demands. This does not mean that post-Soviet minority mobilization in Central Asia necessarily represented a case of "silent dogs". Though fortunately large scale violence did not occur this dissertation argues that minority mobilization did take place. It was however a quiet politics of identity and ethnicity. Episodes of inter-ethnic clashes did occur, but remained limited to specific cases. Minority groups typically sought to advance their demands by co-operating with authorities rather than by confronting or antagonising them. The means of claim-making were non violent, and their attitude towards state authorities amicable, and hence the label "quiet".

1.3 Rationale and research questions

As noted in the previous section, ethnic minority mobilization has been a neglected area of study with regard to post-Soviet transformation in Central Asia (Foltz, 1996; Kolstø, 1996, 1999, 2000; Schatz, 1999). This dissertation seeks to fill in this gap by looking at the dynamics of ethnic mobilization among one particular ethnic minority group, the Uzbeks, in two states of former Soviet Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since independence (1991-2003).

Unlike the Russian diasporas, Uzbeks have not been "diasporised" by either voluntary or forcible migration, but by the movement of borders across settlements. The Soviet discourse which emphasised how each nation had one and only one historical homeland served the post-Soviet elites well in their process of othering/diasporization of Uzbeks. Given that Kyrgyzstan was created as the homeland of Kyrgyz (and the Tajik case likewise) all the other communities must have come from elsewhere. Koreans from Korea, Russians from Russia, Uzbeks from Uzbekistan.

The case of Uzbeks is significant in a number of other ways. Uzbeks constituted the largest Muslim and also the largest non Slavic community in the former Soviet Union. In post-Soviet Central Asia, they are the most populous ethnic group and their political behaviour and the way Uzbek co-ethnics relate themselves

to the country where the majority of kins live (Uzbekistan) ultimately affects the whole region, its stability and the process of state- and nation-building there. It is not merely about demographics though, but also about geopolitics. Should Uzbekistan adopt a pro-active stance towards Uzbeks abroad, seeking to re-unite them with the mainland or even just to act on their behalf to protect them, this could potentially enflame the region.

Map 1.1 Uzbekistan and Uzbeks abroad

Source: Original Uzbekistan map available at www.ozodlik.org and later modified by the author. Uzbek settlements outwith Uzbekistan are marked with green dots. These are not in scale and do not indicate the density of such settlements.

Uzbekistan matters because it is demographically the stronger state in the region and has the largest army, which the Uzbekistani authorities have not refrained from using whenever Uzbekistani strategic interests are stake. This has included military support alongside political backing to pro-government factions in the Tajik civil war

(Horsman, 1999a), conducting police operations in foreign territory un-authorised[10], and unilaterally demarcating and mining state borders. As Uzbekistan is militarily stronger than all its neighbours, a state dispute could potentially lead the region into a domino effect of violence and instability (would Uzbekistan's neighbours retaliate by supporting its minorities?).

The Ferghana Valley well illustrates the complexity of these issues. The region, spanning the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, is home to a significant number of enclaves, portions of territory under the formal sovereignty of a neighbouring state (the largest of which are Sox, Shax-i-Mardan, under Uzbekistani sovereignty, and Vorukh, part of Tajikistan). The valley has become the object of international attention because of its conflict potential arising from widespread social and economic deprivation, political repression, competition for scarce resources and lack of institutional mechanism to voice, let alone address, popular demands. Understanding how Uzbeks perceive themselves and where their cultural and political loyalties lie has implications that go well beyond the domestic politics of one particular Central Asian country and affects the wider region and beyond. Uzbekistan's shift towards active support for Uzbek co-ethnics or the latters' choice for rebellion may ignite the region by unleashing a domino effect on the region's cross-border ethnic groups.

Because this scenario has not materialised during the post-independence period, the empirical puzzle this dissertation aims to explain is the following: if Uzbek co-ethnics did not seem to mobilize en masse, *what exactly did they do and why?* In order to solve this puzzle this study intends to answer the following questions:

(1) What explans the trajectory of Uzbek ethno-political mobilization in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan?

(2) How do the two cases compare in terms of activities, forms of organization and action, objectives and strategies?

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[10]Naumkin (2003). Since summer 1999 (when militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan organised incursions from Tajikistan through Kyrgyzstani territory into Uzbekistan) this type of operations has intensified. Also, until very recently it was not infrequent for Uzbek troops to spill over into Kyrgyz territory to arrest elements allegedly belonging to the Uzbek opposition.

1.4. Combining social movement research and nationalism studies

Susan Olzak has correctly noted (2004, p.665) that social movement research and nationalism studies have developed as separate fields of inquiry. This needs not be so, she argues, as important theoretical and methodological insights can be drawn from both. In fact, what this dissertation attempts to do is to draw on the contributions of both of these areas of research and attempt a comprehensive explanation of the mobilizational trajectories of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Studies on state- and nation-building have traditionally emphasised the importance of the elites as the main actors shaping the course of post-Soviet transformation (Adams, 1999a and 1999b; Brubaker, 1996; Cummings, 2002a; Melvin, 1998 and 2000; Jones Luong, 2002; Taras, 2001). I share the view that elites are the main actors in the political process. Their choices and strategies crucially shape the form that post-Soviet transformation takes, particularly so in the case of ethnic political mobilization. Elites matter because of their status and position in the system, but also because they possess the resources, tangible and intangible, to mobilise the rank and file. Two concepts are particularly relevant here: leadership and strategy. Leaders are understood as "strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate to social and political movements" (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004), while strategy involves "the selection of objectives and the search for the most appropriate means to achieve those objectives within a particular context at a particular moment in time" (Hay, 1995 p.190).

This study emphasises elites' strategies without neglecting popular perceptions at grassroots level. In order to do so it builds on the numerous contributions from social movement research which have traditionally looked more at mass perceptions and processes (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 1998). The two fields of research well integrate because of the traditional neglect within social movement studies of elites and specifically leaders, their types and strategies in shaping the mobilizational process (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004, and Barker et al., 2001 being two noteworthy exceptions). An additional contribution of social movement research lies in the importance assigned to ideas (understood in this context as "frames") in connecting

leaders – and potential followers. The concept of *frames*, originally introduced in social psychology by Erving Goffman (1974) and later developed further by Snow (Snow and Benford, 1992; Snow et al., 1986), has been widely used in social movement research (Zald, 1996, but also Tarrow, 1998 and Tilly, 1995) and more recently from scholars investigating national mobilization in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period (Adams, 1999a and 1999b; Gorenburg, 2003; Ukudeeva-Freeman, 2003). Frames can be defined as "interpretive schemes that condense and simplify a person's experience by selectively highlighting and encoding certain situations, objects, events and experiences" (Gorenburg 2003, p.11). Understanding the extent to which a particular frame (i.e. secession, autonomy, indigenousness, diasporic identity, anti-state sentiment, pro-government activism) resonates across the population has allowed Dmitry Gorenburg (2003) and Jamilya Ukudeeva-Freeman (2003) to explain the dynamics of mobilization among ethnic minorities in Russia and the rise and demise of the national-democratic movements in late Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan respectively.

1.5. Uzbek mobilization and the structure and agency question: Towards a strategic-relational approach to ethno-political mobilization

By combining insights from studies on elites and frames I seek to develop a working theoretical framework (outlined in chapter 3) that accounts for strategies and forms of ethnic minority mobilization among post-Soviet Uzbek co-ethnics. This allows me to locate the issue of Uzbek mobilization within the broader structure and agency question, arguably a "central question of political analysis" (Giddens, 1984; Hay, 2002; McAnulla, 2002). Only rarely has this question been openly addressed in studies on the post-Soviet space. Sally Cummings has looked at how divergent forms of authoritarianism have emerged from initial common paths in Central Asia, acknowledging the role of both elite choices and structural factors (2002a). Pauline Jones Luong has developed a bargaining game model to study the pacted transitions in Central Asia and has noted how looking at the role of structural factors and preconditions as well as the choices and bargains of the Soviet/post-Soviet elites is crucial to understand why from initial starting points three Central Asian states have developed three different electoral systems and, more broadly, different political

trajectories of transformation (2002). Again a divide has emerged here between social movement research and political studies on the former Soviet space, with the former adopting – I argue – an excessively structural approach, and the latter over-emphasising the centrality of elites, and forgetting about the followers - those who, in the end, have to be mobilised for a successful mobilization to occur.

I do not deny the importance of context, most notably of the legacies (political, economic, and cultural) of the Soviet experience, in shaping the course of Uzbek mobilization. In fact, this study shows how structural factors have constrained as well as provided opportunities to Uzbek actors to mobilise. However, context does not (pre-)determine political action, but defines the range of strategies available to political agents who would then choose among them. In this respect, Mark Beissinger's work on late Soviet nationalist mobilization is invaluable as it takes into account structural, agential, and ideational factors in shaping the various tides of nationalist mobilization (2002). At the same time, this dissertation departs from Beissinger's research in two crucial and significantly related areas. Firstly, by looking at how a "strategic-relational approach" can be used to make sense of ethno-political mobilization in post-Soviet Central Asia, rather than drawing on Margaret Archer's "morphogenetic approach" (1988; 1996)[11], as Beissinger did, to make sense of national mobilization. I do not argue that these two approaches are mutually exclusive – in fact both build on critical realist epistemology and advance our understanding of the structure and agency question by seeking to overcome the traditional dualism existing in political analysis. Time and events occupy a central stage in Beissinger's analysis. This is necessary in a study on waves of nationalism, and especially when the general aim is to make sense of the *level* of mobilization (how much mobilization or how many mobilizational events?). Second, while I accept the significance of events (the Osh conflict and the Tajik civil war, electoral campaigns, meetings of Uzbek organizations) and time (noting how strategies developed over the post-independence years) I argue that a "strategic-relational

[11]In short, Archer's approach (and by extension, Beissinger's) focuses on the temporal dimension in distinguishing between structure and agency. The two are not only analytically distinct, but empirically as well: one pre-dates the other. Archer also crucially places culture (the ideational dimension) alongside structure and agency as a third meta-theoretical concept in the explanation of political phenomena. The advantages of adopting a strategic-relational approach over a morphogenetic one are discussed in chapter 3.

approach", a framework originally conceived by Bob Jessop (1990) and later developed further by Colin Hay (2002) – with the emphasis on the strategic selectivity of context and the relational nature of structure and agency - is better suited to explain how structure, agency, and ideas interact in a non-eventful process of mobilization. The SRA is outlined in detail in chapter 3.

METHODS

1.6. Comparative strategy and case selection: Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

This study adopts a comparative research strategy. Cases were selected on the grounds of a "most similar systems" design (MSSD, Przeworski and Teune 1970), where variation is observed in the dependent variable. This consists of keeping as many independent variables as possible constant which would then make it easier to locate the variables that do differ and which would then be considered as explanatory (Pennings, Keman, Kleinnijenhuis 1999, p.12). The logic of the MSSD is therefore to isolate the effect of one (or more) independent variable(s) by controlling for the effects of spurious or intervening ones, which include "everything that makes up the social, economic and political context and backdrop of the dependent and independent variables" (Burnham et al. 2004, p. 63-64).

This study controls for context (Soviet legacies and the political opportunity structure, chapters 4 and 5) and explores variations in the other two theoretically relevant sets of viariables: ideas and agency. In so doing it hopes to partly address one of the "pathological" conditions of comparative research, that of "too many variables, not enough studies" (Lijphart 1971; Ragin 1987). A two case comparative study does not have ambitions to generate statistically relevant conclusions, but can offer insights deriving from an in-depth focused comparison and contextualised knowledge of the cases. Strong similarities exist between the two cases under investigation. First and foremost the Uzbeks in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan share a legacy of seventy or more years of Soviet history. A brief digression on how the Soviet experience was central to Uzbek nation-making is necessary.

A common Soviet legacy

The importance of the national delimitation process and of the Soviet nationality policies for understanding contemporary dynamics in post-Soviet Central Asia can hardly be over-rated[12]. Soon after re-establishing control over the territories formerly belonging to the Tsarist Empire, the Soviets introduced a comprehensive program of political and social re-organization of Central Asia: the "national delimitation" (*natsional'noe razmezhevanie*, 1924-1936). The process marks the beginning of the nation-making process under Soviet rule. Ethnographers, official representatives, scholars as well as the local population were mobilised in a comprehensive process of re-organization, not just of territory and institutions, but of the peoples that inhabited those lands. Border making, the use of census as a policy tool, the promotion of national languages, and an indigenization policy aimed at creating national cadres were the instruments used by the Soviet authorities to promote nationhood (as opposed to nationalism, a reactionary phenomenon to be eradicated)[13]. For both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and all the Central Asian republics for that matter, modern state formation originates in the Soviet period, with the establishment within their current boundaries of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics in 1929 and the Kyrgyz SSR equivalent in 1936. Both polities underwent various phases of Soviet nationality policies (Hirsch, 1997; Martin 2002; Suny and Martin 2001), including similar approaches to cadre and indigenization policies, re-writing of history according to Soviet ideological precepts, and economic and social modernization. In this sense Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are typical cases in the Central Asian region and likewise Uzbek co-ethnics residing there encounter representative issues affecting co-ethnics (Uzbeks and non) living in Central Asia.

[12]For various studies on this complex process of societal re-organization and its consequences see Hirsch (2005), Martin (2002), Sabol (1994) and Suny and Martin (2001).
[13]These will be examined in depth in the following chapter.

Map 1.2 The Ferghana Valley

Source: International Crisis Group.

Similarities

Indeed, one could go as far as to argue that they constitute two sub-cases of a single case study: the Ferghana Valley, a region which extends over about 20,000 square kilometres straddling Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Each of these countries reproduces within its own boundaries the problematics that the region is typically associated with, most notably the mismatch between borders and ethnic groups, but also the potential for unrest deriving from social and economic deprivation and political alienation. Valerie Bunce has noted that conducting comparative research on the former Soviet Union is particularly fruitful because of the large amount of variation out of a common starting point (2003). The same holds true on a smaller scale in the Ferghana Valley. Historically a cultural and economic unit, the Ferghana Valley experienced a phase of political unity under the Kokand Khanate until this unity fell under the national delimitation process and was divided between the three newly established Union Republics of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Owing to topographic reasons, the regions located in the Ferghana Valley are better integrated with the Republic of Uzbekistan, towards which they gravitated in Soviet

times. Were it not for hassles at the border, a trip from Khujand or Osh to Tashkent would take only a few hours, whereas a journey to Bishkek and Dushanbe would take more than half a day. Kyrgyz and Tajik societies are particularly fragmented and sub-national allegiances have long been stronger than national affiliations. Additionally, clan and/or regional politics have traditionally dominated Tajik and Kyrgyz politics, and the Uzbek minorities in both countries have often played and been played in the intra-ethnic power struggles (Jones Luong, 2002; Collins, 2002 and 2003). It is because of the structural similarity of areas situated in the Ferghana Valley that attention focuses primarily (though not exclusively) on southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan. Uzbeks are located in other areas of those countries as well, particularly so in Tajikistan where sizeable Uzbek communities can be found in the central districts and the capital Dushanbe, as well as the south-western province of Khatlon. As will become clear in the next chapter, the dynamics characterising these other areas are distinct per culture, history of settlement, integration with neighbouring country and role played in the republic from those in the Ferghana Valley. For reasons of simplicity whenever I mention Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan I hereafter refer to those living in the southern provinces (Osh, Batken, Jalalabat) of the former and the northern province (Sughd) of the latter.

What both case studies also share is the recent demographic dominance acquired by the titular groups. While Tajiks already represented the majority of the population in the Soviet times, the share of the titular group has risen further since independence. The case of Kyrgyzstan is even more striking with Kyrgyz presence increasing form a bare majority to about 65%. In both countries Uzbeks now represent the largest non titular group, having outnumbered all other ethnic communities.

Finally, even the political development of the two countries since the late Soviet period is similar. In fact, before the Soviet collapse the Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani societies were among the more pluralistic in Central Asia. Some degree of political competition was allowed, informal organizations proliferated and different candidates competed in different elections. This trend continued in Kyrgyzstan for the first part of the following decade, to the point that in an excess of

hyperbole the country came to be referred to as "Central Asia's island of democracy". After initial reforms, however, state authorities in both countries have resorted to authoritarian practices to consolidate their position in power, relying less on democratic procedures of accountability and responsibility or participatory governance. Both Presidents Akaev and Rakhmonov have tended to rely on an ever narrower power base, with allegiance personal rather than political.

Differences

Obviously, one should not overlook the differences that exist between the two cases, most notably the fact that Tajikistan descended in a bloody civil war from 1992 until 1997 and that is has only recently begun a process of institutional and societal reconstruction. Kyrgyzstan also experienced its brief, but bloody phase of communal infighting during the 1990 Osh conflict, but state and societal breakdown have been prevented despite the fact that the odds were stacked against it (regional, ethnic sub-regional and clan cleavages, social and economic deprivation).

While I am aware of the limitations inherent to a comparative research strategy, most notably the question of causal inference (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994), causal over-determination (Przeworski and Teune, 1970) and that of "too many variables, too few countries" (Lijphart, 1971)[14], I believe that a focused comparison can make a significant contribution to theory-building by contextualizing the knowledge (Hague and Harrop, 2001) of the processes of ethno-political mobilization, thereby escaping the ethnocentrism that has often characterised this field of research (for example relying on electoral data as the main measure of the mobilizational process and on Western case studies) and the tendency to be overly reliant on some methodological tools (event analysis, a quantitative technique which looks at the number of forms of protest to determine the presence or absence of mobilization).

In this study I focus on the post-independence period (1991-2003), athough it is inevitable that events and processes unfolding from the eve of the Soviet collapse will come under examination. I refer particularly to the 1990 Osh conflict in Kyrgyzstan and its legacy (the shadow cast on inter-ethnic relations in the country)

[14]I address these and other questions in the methodological appendix.

and the shifting political opportunity structure in Tajikistan, with the balance of power tilting away from the northern faction of Leninabad, until then *de facto* ruling the country for most of the Soviet era. The research adopts the year 2003 as the cut-off point. This means that the recent events that have led to the ousting Askar Akaev on the 24th of March 2005 fall outwith the present enquiry, and so does the electoral campaign that has led up to the contested parliamentary elections of February and March 2005. While I do not discuss these events, wherever appropriate the implications that a change in context may or may not cause on the strategies of Uzbek mobilization (or vice versa, how a change in strategy may affect the context) are considered.

1.7. Techniques of data collection

In order to answer the questions outlined in section 1.3, I rely on the combination of different research techniques. As this dissertation operates at different levels of analysis and looks at different actors and institutions, adopting only one method would have been impracticable. Quantitative methods, for example, do not represent the most suitable way of investigating what particular kind of frames were adopted by ethno-political entrepreneurs and the rationale behind their adoption. Similarly, the strengths of attachment to various forms of cultural and/or political loyalties are better investigated through survey methods (where the aim is to measure the extent to which a form of identity is widespread) or through interviews (where one is interested in how different forms of identity are accommodated).

The combined use of multiple research methods (also known as "triangulation"[15]) constitutes an extremely valuable device to balance the weaknesses and strengths of each method. As no method is error-proof, the weaknesses or dimensions that one technique cannot explore because of its very nature (see later), a second method can compensate for. This is particularly the case in studies of identity and identity transformation. An established method in nationalism studies, survey research measures the strength of collective identity and constitutes a solid (and less time-consuming) device to gather large quantities of data. On account of its own nature quantitative research on identity issues risks overlooking nuances. This weakness of

[15]Blaikie (2000).

survey methods can be addressed and balanced by the conduct of parallel (or follow-up) individual interviews and/or focus groups. As a matter of fact the strength of the claim does not lie in numbers only. There are issues that the ranking, ordering, and measuring of survey methods cannot grasp. These are the nuances that emerge and are discussed in individual or group interviews, where the respondent re-engages – at times – with his or her answers from the survey and qualifies them. That these qualifications are not lost in the amount of data gathered in the survey is crucial and allows us to understand the internal dynamics and complexities of what would otherwise appear as a monolithic community.

It is also important to note that Uzbek political mobilization cannot be studied in the same way that, for example, Estonian, Georgian, or Ukrainian or even Kazakh mobilization were approached in the late Soviet era, let alone mobilization in open political systems (i.e. Basque, Catalunyan, Scottish, Flemish, north-Italian ethno-national mobilization). The former represented instances of collapsing polities opening windows of political opportunity, whereas the latter are in fact examples of (however imperfect) open societies. This leads to two considerations. On a theoretical level the main difference to be taken into account lies in the authoritarian nature of the Central Asian states. The structure of political opportunities is subject to stricter controls than that of countries like Spain, Scotland, or the late Soviet Baltic republics. A closed or semi-closed opportunity structure means also a more controlled flow of information. Reliable information, as emphasised by Horsman (1999b) is a "rare commodity" in former Soviet Central Asia. This clearly affects the type and quantity of information available on such a sensitive issue as ethnic minority mobilization and has obvious methodological implications. An event approach to nationalist mobilization such as Beissinger's or a political claims analysis (relying on the number and type of claims made by a group, ie petitions, letters, etc., as in Giugni and Passy, 2004) are impractical in this case. Episodes such as demonstrations or other episodes of contention have been sporadic since independence and a coding and analysis thereof would not capture the complexity of the process of Uzbek mobilization, which would appear as being in inertial state. As a consequence this study does not set out to measure the level of mobilization, but seeks to measure the strategies (what type of political behaviour have Uzbeks

adopted and why?) and forms of Uzbek political mobilization (how do Uzbeks mobilize? Through what organizations?). An investigation of strategies and forms of mobilization is therefore more effectively undertaken by means of the following techniques of data collection:

- small-scale surveys, to investigate the various levels of attachment to cultural and political loyalties, political interest and participation;
- semi-structured individual interviews, to identify salient or recurrent themes emerged from the surveys and to understand particular historical contingencies and choices of elites and non-elite actors;
- documentary analysis, which includes a study of official documents (state policies or laws, presidential publications/conceptualisations of state ideologies) and regional reports, and an analysis of local media, print or web-based, to supplement information collected through the previous two techniques.

Field research has been conducted over several visits to the region, beginning in 2001 when, before starting my doctoral program in Edinburgh I stayed for three months in Samarkand to undertake Uzbek and Tajik language training. It was on this occasion that the question of co-ethnics (Uzbeks and Tajiks) first came to my attention. I then returned to the region during the winter of 2002 to visit Uzbekistan and again over the summer of 2003 in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

While key methodological issues have been addressed in these pages and are also discussed throughout the chapters that follow, I opted to leave a methodological chapter to the end of the dissertation. This should not be read as downplaying the importance of methodological issues. The reason for this lies mainly in my decision not to overload the narrative of Uzbek mobilization with issues that, however crucial for the conduct of research, would temporarily divert attention from the dynamics of the mobilizational process. Although I acknowledge the advantages that incorporating a standard methodological chapter within the main body of the dissertation carries, I opted for a different path, which I hope adequately suits the structure of the study.

1.8. Limitations of the study

There are some natural limitations as to what this study can achieve. First is the main focus of analysis being concentrated on the domestic level, within Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, namely on how Uzbeks organize and mobilise within those polities and how they interact with the surrounding context (state authorities). I am well aware that international organizations have played an increasing role in the region, but their action is not treated here. In recent years the United Nations (particularly, but not only) through its Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (again, particularly through the action of the High Commissioner on National Minorities) have promoted and advised on the adoption of inclusive policies towards national minorities, i.e. in the sectors of education (curricula, textbooks), media (outlets in languages other that states ones), and more generally on the responsibilities that states have towards minority groups and such groups towards state authorities[16]. However, because attention is here paid to the interaction between state and group, the role of external players is not discussed. The only exception to this is Uzbekistan because of the particular nature of the country, where the possibilities that it may behave as the group's ethnic patron directly and crucially affects the relations between state and Uzbek community.

Second, and partly overlapping with the previous point, is the emergence of civil society remains at the margins of discussion. This is certainly not to neglect its importance, particularly in Kyrgyzstan. Whenever appropriate, namely in chapter 7, I refer to how the closure of spaces for autonomous political action have "pushed" some within the Uzbek community to opt for involvement in activities and organizations that escape – to some extent[17] - state attention and intervention. The establishment as well as the problems encountered by civil society in Central Asia is such a complex topic of research worth a separate study. Findings in chapter 7 suggest that more needs to be done to explore the way minority groups activate through NGOs and IGOs in non democratic settings.

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[16]Insightful contributions on the topic are Höynick (2004) and Sabahi and Warner (2004).

[17]One should not overestimate the freedom of action of NGOs in the region. In her study on the civic realm in Kyrgyzstan Kelly McMann correctly notes how members of local NGOs do not seek separation from the state, but rather its support and do not view close association with the authorities as a threat to their autonomy (2004).

A third topic that remains outside the scope of this analysis is the relationship between Uzbeks and Islamic radicalism. This does not mean that the role of religion and religious allegiances are downplayed. Religion is clearly a marker of Uzbek identity. However, discussing the extent to which organizations such as Hizb-ut Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan appeal to an Uzbek constituency lies outside the scope of this research for the simple reason that recruitment strategies emphasise religious rhetoric over discourses of ethnic marginalization[18].

1.9. Chapters breakdown

Chapter 2 ("The Central Asian Uzbeks") provides a brief historical background to the study. There I look at the question of Uzbek identity formation and patterns of settlement in Central Asia and pay special attention to the critical phase of the national delimitation process (1924-1936) and more broadly the Soviet nationality policies. Chapter 3 ("A strategic-relational approach to ethno-political mobilization") develops some of the themes only hinted at in this chapter. It seeks to develop an operational model to examine the dynamics of Uzbek mobilization. The chapter is divided into two sections. First the main approaches to the study of ethno-political mobilization are discussed. Second, I outline the theoretical framework adopted to investigate Uzbek mobilization: the "strategic-relational approach".

The remaining part of the dissertation is structured thematically, with each chapter (or set of chapters) examining structural, ideational, and agential factors in shaping Uzbek political behaviour. Chapters 4 and 5 investigate the role of context in shaping the spaces available to Uzbek action. Chapter 4 ("The Soviet legacies") assesses the structural preconditions for mobilization. Drawing on the main bodies of literature on ethnic mobilization (role of institutions, identity and economic deprivation) it discusses the significance of the Soviet legacy in the political, economic and cultural realms. Chapter 5 ("Political opportunity structure") discusses the impact of domestic and external actors and institutions upon group behaviour. The state of residence and Uzbekistan are considered here. The primary aim of the chapter is to explore the extent to which the state has provided the group with the spaces necessary to pursue some form of political action and the degree to which this

[18]For an analysis that is both theoretically informed and based on empirical evidence see Naumkin's study of the emergence of the IMU in Central Asia (2003).

action is also subject to factors originating outwith the borders of the country by the hand of a "third party", namely the country where the majority of fellow kins live (Uzbekistan).

Chapter 6 ("Framing the Uzbek question") investigates the significance of non tangible factors for understanding Uzbek politics. Building on the role that framing theory has played in social movement research, the chapter explores the way Uzbek problems and demands (the "Uzbek question") have been framed and the extent to which they have resonated across the wider community. Finally, in Chapter 7 ("Uzbek actors: Leadership, elites fragmentation and popular perceptions") I look at the role played by organizations and individual actors. First the main Uzbek organizations are outlined, and attention paid to their structure and general aims. I then discuss individual agency by looking at the following: who are the leaders? What are their strategies? How do they relate to state authorities and the wider Uzbek community? The final section of the chapter discusses the popular perceptions of state and group leadership. The study is concluded by Chapter 8 ("Conclusion") which ties the different chapters together and locates the contributions within the larger fields of ethnic mobilization studies and post-Soviet research, and an additional "methodological appendix" (Chapter 9).

CHAPTER 2

The Central Asian Uzbeks: A brief introduction

O'zbekka o'xshashni topmoq muammo
O'xshasa o'ziga o'xshaydi O'zbek
Qiyosi yo'q uning bag'ri bir daryo
Dunyoda bolam deb yashaydi O'zbek
(M. Yusuf[19])

The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief background to the study of "Uzbeks abroad" by looking at the process of Uzbek identity formation. First, I discuss the process of Uzbek group formation and the emergence of Uzbek identity. Second, the role of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (hereafter UzSSR) as a nation-making political formation is discussed within the Soviet attempts to remake Central Asian societies along national lines. The chapter leads up to the Soviet demise and independence, while Soviet legacies in contemporary Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are explored in chapter 4.

2.1. The Uzbeks: Dynamics of group formation

The ethnonym "Uzbek" made its appearance in the region in the sixteenth century, when the Dasht-i Kipchak nomadic tribes migrated to the Central Asian region and settled there under the Shaybanid dynasty (Schoeberlein-Engel, 1996 p.14, Ilkhamov, 2003 p.270). However, the extent to which today's Uzbeks are direct descendants of those tribes is disputed. Since independence the country's leadership has emphasized the historical continuity between pre-modern and modern Uzbek people. Central to the regime's project appear to be two concepts: the ancient origins of Uzbek statehood and its historical greatness[20]. Connecting the past to the present or, better, rewriting the past in service of the present, has been a central tool of the Uzbekistani elites' self-legitimising effort, the goal being the construction of (the current

[19]"It is difficult to find someone who looks like an Uzbek. Uzbeks look like themselves. They are unique. Uzbeks live for their children".
[20]For a discussion of the role of ideology in the Uzbek state-building process see March (2002a and 2002b).

president) Islam Karimov as a modern-day Amir Temur. Establishing whether Uzbek presence in the region dates back to the times of the Shaybanids, Timurids, or even Alexander the Great is not a matter for historians only[21], but lies at the very centre of the project of state and nation-building.

In his "Archaeology of Uzbek identity" Alisher Ilkhamov (2003 and 2004) correctly – though contrary to most contemporary Uzbek historiography[22] - argues that it is necessary to operate a distinction between contemporary Uzbeks, who owe much of their group consciousness (*ong*) to the Soviet efforts of nation-making over more than seven decades, and Uzbeks of the fifteenth to nineteenth century (2003 p.270). Ilkhamov also contends that the origins of today's Uzbeks lie in fact in the encounter between (at least) three "ethnic groups" (*obshchnosti*): Dasht-i Kipchak nomadic tribes, local Turkic tribes, and Sarts[23].

The label Uzbek originates in the fourteenth century from the name of Uzbek khan (1312-1340), a descendant of Chinggis Khan and ruler of the Golden Horde (ibid.). The ethnonym began to be associated with the subjects of the Golden Horde, not simply to Turkic-speaking, but also to Turkic-Mongolic tribes. Charismatic leaders such as Uzbek Khan, Abulkhair Khan or Shaybany Khan played a major role in the unification of their subjects under a centralized political formation, combining adherence to Islam and customary law inherited from Chinggis Khan. After the sixteenth century, when other local Uzbek tribes joined forces with the ruler Shaybany Khan, Uzbek khans came to reign over a large territory of today's Central Asia (ibid.). There allegiance was personal and tribal rather than ethnic, and loyalty to a dynasty defined the sense of belonging of the subjects. Gradually Uzbek nomadic tribes shifted from a nomadic to a settled life style.

While Dasht-i Kipchak tribes formed the core of the Shaybanid dynasty around which other tribes coalesced, other tribes (Mongol and Oghuz, among others) also joined the Uzbek tribes. Contextually to the formation of the Uzbek tribal confederation under the Shaybanid, a separate dynasty (the Timurids) emerged

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[21]I occasionally met respondents, typically employed at university departments of history, who linked Uzbek ethnogenesis to the era of Alexander the Great (Tashkent and Samarkand, December 2002).

[22]See Ersanlı (2002, especially p.342-348) for a brief review of post-independence Uzbek historiography embarked on a "formulation of the past as an official political enterprise" (ibid., p. 337) and the methodological and political dilemmas encountered by Uzbek historians (see also Adams, 2003).

[23]On Sarts and their eradication see Schoeberlein (1994 and 1996).

within the Chagatay "ulus"[24]. Similarly to the case of the Golden Horde where the subjects came to identify themselves as Uzbeks regardless of their ethnic or tribal affiliation after the Uzbek Khan rule, the Turko-Mongol conqueror Tamerlane's defeat of the Chagatay ulus and the establishment of the Timurid dynasty brought an analogous process, where a new collective label, Chagatay, was introduced to refer to all those who were not Uzbeks (later the boundaries between Uzbek and Chagatay identity became blurred, but originally the terms referred to distinct forms of identification).

The category of Sarts constitutes the third large element out of which modern Uzbek identity was formed. Similarly to "Chagatay" and "Uzbek", the term "Sart" never implied an ethnic substratum. Instead, it referred to the urban sedentary population of Central Asia, mostly bilingual in Persian/Tajik and Turkic languages. The boundary sedentary/settled in pre-Soviet Central Asia was of much more significance than any attempt to look for ethnic loyalties. In sum, as John Schoeberlein notes (1996), when approaching the study of Uzbeks and Uzbek identity one should be wary of assuming it constitutes a cohesive whole. Rather, an approach which acknowledges the internal heterogeneity of the Uzbek community is required, as noted by Laura Adams with regard to the regional variations and understandings of Uzbekness in Uzbekistan (Adams, 1999a and 1999b) and by Shirin Akiner with reference to Tajikistani Uzbeks (2001). This does not lead to the denial of the existence of an Uzbek ethno-national community. However, the label Uzbek should be treated more as an *umbrella term* rather than as indicating a cohesive and homogenous group.

Central Asia was incorporated into the Russian Empire at various stages in the second half of the nineteenth century[25]. At the time, the southern regions of Central Asia – the areas of Uzbek settlement today - were divided into three pre-modern types of political formations, the khanates of Khiva and Kokand and one emirate, Bukhara. Kokand, which extended over large part of the Ferghana Valley had been established in 1709 when it was carved out of the Bukharan emirate. After being

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[24]Ulus refers to the allotment of territory in which Cingghis Khan's empire was divided following his death.

[25]What is now northern Kazakhstan had come into contact with the Russian Empire since the early eighteenth century.

abolished in 1876, it was annexed to the Turkestan Governatorate-General of the Russian empire as part of the Ferghana oblast' (Soucek, 2000 p. 201-202). At the same time Bukhara and Khiva continued their formally distinct existence as Russian protectorates (Haugen, 2003 p.2), while losing sections of their territories, transferred to the Syrdarya and Samarkand provinces of the Governatorate (Soucek, 2000 p. 202). Further adjustments were made at the easternmost edges of the Bukharan emirate as well, which came to include most of contemporary Tajikistan, excluding Badakhshan, annexed to the Ferghana province, and the area around Khujand, divided between Ferghana and Samarkand (ibid.)

2.2. The Soviet formative period, from "national delimitation" to independence (1924-1991)

The tumultuous period between the collapse of the Tsarist empire in the region (1916) and the emergence of Soviet rule (1920) saw the Governatorate of Turkestan being replaced by the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a sub-unit of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1918 and Khiva (then renamed Khorezm) and Bukhara being established as "People's Republics" in 1918 and 1920 respectively. Anti-Soviet resistence coalesced in the eastern areas of Central Asia and particularly following the proclamation of a short-lived autonomous government in Kokand in 1918 (abolished in 1919). Episodic insurgencies from the so-called Basmachi (bandits) continued until the late 1920s[26].

A comprehensive program of political and social re-organization of Central Asia was then launched under the label of "national delimitation" (*natsional'noe razmezhevanie*) in 1924, a date which constitutes a watershed in the modern history of the region. The logic behind this process is followed by a discussion of how the making of Soviet Central Asia was carried out in practice.

The Soviet Union embarked upon one of the greatest nation-building enterprises in modern human history. This did not simply involve re-organizing Central Asia in five Union Republics (which came to completion in 1936), but more comprehensively it consisted of a complex process of categorization of the Soviet people. The Soviet Union took form, Hirsch maintains (2005 p.312), "through a

[26]In this rather chaotic period of disintegration of political order and subsequent re-integration, especially in Tashkent and the Ferghana Valley, see Buttino (2002).

process of double assimilation". The diverse population of the former Tsarist Empire would develop into nations (corresponding to the official nationality categories), and then later into a Soviet whole (the Soviet *narod*, greater than the sum of its parts[27]). Though the final stage would be the merger or fusion (*slianie*) of all nations into a unified Soviet people, this would be preceded by a coming together of nations (*sblizhenie*), where inequalities between nations would be eradicated and national cultures allowed to flourish (Hirsch, 2005 p. 317-318). The language and rhetoric of friendship of peoples (*druzhba narodov*) used by the Uzbek elites in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan builds on this Soviet theory of historical development.

The transformation of the state and by extension of the peoples that lived in those territories, began with a complex categorization of all those populations. Key to this was the concept of "ethnos" (Bromley, 1973; Kandiyoti, 2002 p.290). Ethnos became the basic unit of ethnic classification (Hirsch, 2005 p.313). Ethnos was defined as an "ethno-social formation with a complex of historical and cultural traits" (Rudenko quoted in Hirsch, ibid.)[28]. Ethnoses evolved over time. At the earliest possible stages of development were tribes (*plemena*): the tribe was the "predominant form of ethnosocial organization for primitive social formations" (Bromley quoted in Hirsch, ibid.). Narodnost was the form for "slave-owning feudal formation", and the nation (*natsionalnost*) for "capitalist and socialist formations" (ibid.).

According to the Soviet classification, Uzbeks fell in the more "developed" category: that of nations (*national'nosti*). While it is beyond doubt that the ethnonym Uzbek pre-existed the creation of the eponymous republic and that a (small) number of inhabitants of what is roughly encompassed by Uzbekistan's borders perceived themselves as Uzbek in the pre-Soviet era (Schoeberlein-Engel, 1996, p.15-16; Ilkhamov, 2003), at the time there was no widespread sense of Uzbek group consciousness. The creation of such link between territory (whereupon Uzbek statehood could be established) and (Uzbek national) identity constitutes one of the most enduring examples of Soviet legacies. As Ilkhamov argues, "the formation of Uzbek identity should be seen in close connection with the formation of the Uzbek SSR" (2003 p.288). This process was multi-dimensional and comprised the

[27]Hirsch (2005 p.317).
[28]On Soviet ethnogenesis see Slezkine (1996).

establishment and commitment to four forms of nationhood: national territories, languages, elites, cultures. Framed in the language of national self-determination, Soviet nation-building was compensatory with regard to non Russian nationalities, as they were constructed as victims of "Great-Russian Chauvinism" during the Tsarist era. While Terry Martin's thesis that the Soviet Union was an "affirmative action empire" (2001 and 2002) can be shared with regard to titular groups, communities enjoying an enhanced status within the national territory named after them, the thesis deserves qualification when looking at national minorities, even if these belonged to groups that had an alleged historical homeland within the Soviet state. In fact, while Uzbeks occupied a privileged position in Soviet Uzbekistan, they played a secondary role in the life of the republics where they found themselves. As Kamp argues, Uzbeks "could expect access to positions and opportunities within Uzbekistan but did not find doors opened wide within the larger boundaries of the Soviet Union" (ibid., p. 273), not even if this meant next door, in Kyrgyzstan or to a minor extent Tajikistan[29].

As Francine Hirsch contends, the "national delimitation remains at the heart of a debate about the nature of Soviet rule" (2000 p. 202). Its peculiarity lies in its being at the same time a nation-making enterprise and an attempt to define "a new (and presumably nonimperialistic) model of colonization" (ibid. p.202-203). The two went hand in hand, Hirsch argues. Khorezm, Bukhara and the Turkestan ASSR were abolished and replaced with national-territorial political formations, the Soviet republics. Initially, the Uzbek and the Turkmen SSRs were established in 1924. At a lower level in the Soviet hierarchical ethno-federal structure was the Kyrgyz autonomous province (AO), part of the RSFSR (in 1925 renamed Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, ASSR), the Kara-Kirgiz AO (later Kirgiz) and the Tajik ASSR. The latter was established in the easternmost regions of the territory of the UzSSR in 1924.

A first major border adjustment took place in 1929, when the Tajikistan ASSR was detached from the UzSSR and upgraded to full republican status (SSR). In that year it was agreed that 26,100 sq. km (and a population of around 250,000) would be allocated to the Tajikistan SSR. This comprised what is now the

[29]I return to this qualification in the next section.

Leninabad/Sughd province (then *okrug*) (Akiner, 2001: 15). The process entailed a significant land swap with the area around Khujand in the western Ferghana Valley, previously in Uzbekistan, becoming incorporated into the TaSSR. The reason for this boundary change lay in the precarious existence of the Tajik Soviet republic, otherwise comprising the remote and mountainous Gorno-Badakhshan province in the Pamiri region and a few valleys in central Tajikistan, but no real urban and industrial, or even cultural centre. Cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara as well as the Surkhandarya region where Tajik/Persian culture was particularly concentrated were left in Uzbekistan[30]. This sparked numerous controversies between intellectuals and party officials in the two republics over territory and, more crucially, the cultural heritage of the region (Akiner, 2001 p. 14; Haugen, 2003; Schoeberlein 1994; and Masov, 1991 and 1995, for a view that sees in the national-delimitation an explicit Soviet design to enhance the position of Uzbeks over that of Tajiks).

Similar – though less charged with symbolic attachment – was the contestation of borders that accompanied the formation of the Kyrgyz ASSR in 1926 (previously Autonomous Province, AO). Uzbekistan SSR and Kyrgyz ASSR advanced conflicting claims to sovereignty over sections of territory located in the Ferghana Valley (Koichiev, 2003). In particular Uzbekistan laid claim to the city of Osh and other settlements around the Aravan, Bazaar-Kurgan, and Ayim (Osh volost') and others around Jalalabad volosts' (ibid., p. 50-56). Claims, through petitions and letters to Moscow, were justified on both economic (the extent to which the area was economically integrated to the surrounding territory) and ethnic (where different census data were presented to support one group or another's demographic majority) grounds (ibid.). Fragments of territory, and the peoples inhabiting them, were transferred from one republic to the other, each time meeting fierce opposition from the ceding side. Finally, a commission was set up in 1926 to settle these ethno-territorial claims. In the end Uzbekistan's claim to Osh was rejected because of the importance the city played at the economic and administrative level in southern Kyrgyzstan (ibid., p.52). Under Uzbekistan's sovereignty fell also the enclaves of Sox and Shax-i-Mardan, whereas Kyrgyzstan retained, among the others, the areas around Aravan and Uch-Kurgan.

[30]Samarkand was the first capital of the Uzbek SSR until it was demoted to the benefit of Tashkent in 1929.

For the first thirty years of Soviet rule southern Kyrgyzstan experienced continuous administrative re-organization, with the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions first established as separate administrative units (okrug) in 1924, then merged in the Osh okrug in 1928, only to be divided again in 1938. The situation stabilized in 1956 with the creation of the Osh province (oblast') which extended over all of southern Kyrgyzstan. The situation lasted until 1990, when the Jalal-Abad province was established (Jones Luong, 2002 p. 77). The complex process of re-organization started in 1924 was by and large complete in 1936 with the establishment of five Union Republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Much has been said about the rationale behind the national border delimitation in Central Asia. Scholarship has divided between those arguing that the mismatch between ethnic groups and borders in Central Asia was deliberate and led by a "divide et impera" logic (Olcott, 1994; Roy, 1995) and those contending that national delimitation was the product, not always fortunate, but as accurate as possible, of Soviet ethnographers and officials who after years of field research sought to create national territories which more or less reflected the reality on the ground (Slezkine, 1994; Hirsch, 1997 and 2000; Megoran, 2002d). I do share the view that Soviet national delimitation in Central Asia was not an arbitrary and ruthless project aimed at dividing ethnic groups for mere power politics purposes. Delimitation was not just super-imposed, but was a negotiated as well as contested effort (Haugen, 2003). However, arbitrariness did play a role when it came to deciding which groups be given titular status and which should instead be subsumed in larger nations. Uzbeks, Turkmen and to some extent Kazakhs[31] were recognized as having reached a more advanced stage in the development of national consciousness. Others, most notably Tajiks and Kyrgyz, were given official recognition as titular and full-fledged nations only at a later stage, in 1929 (when the Tajik SSR was established) and 1936 (year of creation of the Kyrgyz SSR).

The government organ responsible for shaping and controlling Soviet Central Asia was not the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow or the Communist Party of Turkestan, but the Central Asian Bureau of the Central

[31]Initially mistakenly called "Kirghiz".

Committee (*SredazBureau*, CAB hereafter), which existed from 1922 until 1934 (Keller, 2003, p.281, Haugen, 2003, p.3). As Keller argues, the CAB was never just a tool for imposing Bolshevik will (Keller, 2003 p.282). Rather it was caught between competing power interests in Moscow and in then Turkestan. Haugen (2003) goes even further in arguing that not only was there a competition and negotiation of interests between centre and periphery ("fostering national autonomy while never allowing European Bolshevik control to slip", Keller, 2003, p.282), but that to some extent it also corresponded to the national aspiration of the populations of the region. The emergence of a national form of consciousness had perhaps reached a more advanced stage in the case of Uzbeks on the eve of the establishment of Soviet rule in the region. While it is beyond doubt that the ethnonym Uzbek pre-existed the creation of the eponymous republic and that a (small) number of inhabitants of what is roughly encompassed by Uzbekistan's borders perceived themselves as Uzbek in the pre-Soviet era (Schoeberlein-Engel, 1996, p.15-16; Ilkhamov, 2003), at the time there was no widespread sense of Uzbek group consciousness. The creation of such link between territory (whereupon Uzbek statehood could be established) and (Uzbek national) identity constitutes one of the most enduring examples of Soviet legacy. As Ilkhamov argues, "the formation of Uzbek identity should be seen in close connection with the formation of the Uzbek SSR" (2003 p.288).

Soviet rule had a profound transformative effect on Central Asia, and on Uzbeks in particular. Border-making was certainly fundamental stage in the creation of modern Central Asia, although it would be impossible to understand how radical its impact was without taking into account other distinct though related processes. The first of these consisted of the use of census as a policy tool. Census in Central Asia was never just about statistics. Deciding what categories were to disappear between censuses was as important as determining which would remain and/or emerge as new. While late Tsarist and early Soviet censuses showed that relatively few peoples identified themselves as Uzbeks within the boundaries of what would become Uzbekistan, the 1926 census became part of what Kipchaks, Lokays, but also Tajiks and others regarded as a process of "Uzbekification" of Central Asia. Some social groups such as the Sarts disappeared completely, as the category was deemed unsuitable for census purposes – Sart not indicating any ethnic group, but rather

urban dwellers. The role that Soviet authorities, institutions and ethnographers played in defining the form and content of Uzbekness was crucial. Schoeberlein well illustrates this by looking at how the creation of the Uzbekistan SSR introduced new dynamics in the realm of identity, and generated a "spectacular explosion of the number of people officially counted as Uzbeks" (1996 p.15). According to 1915 data, Samarkand's Tajiks represented 62% of the city's population, with Uzbeks and Sarts accounting for just 1% (ibid., p. 20). By 1926 the number of Tajiks dropped to 10% with Uzbeks increasing to 41%. As Schoeberlein emphasizes, this would amount to a decrease of 82% for Tajiks and increase of 5,000% in the number of Uzbeks within the same period of time (ibid.). Samarkand Tajiks are a case in point, but the process applied to a whole range of other groups, within and outwith Uzbekistan. In Tajikistan, in fact, groups such as Barlos and Lokays, among others, found themselves subsumed within the larger and encompassing category of Uzbek (Hirsch, 2000). An analogous process occurred with regard to Kipchaks in Kyrgyzstan (Koichiev, 2003). Language became the criterion by which to distinguish between groups (on gender, see below). This continued to present problems in areas such as northern Tajikistan, Samarkand and Bukhara where the local population was bilingual if not multilingual and where boundaries between Tajiks and Uzbeks appeared particularly blurred.

Once the boundaries and therefore categories such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, had been set in place, their content had to be delineated. Though I do not argue that these were "empty shells" in the early Soviet period, what the local population from Osh, Khujand, Tashkent, and Andijan understood as "Uzbek" and how this manifested itself in practice changed significantly. This made the standardization and homogenization of Uzbekness necessary, with institutions such as theatres, curricula at schools and folklore ensembles made available to create and reinforce Uzbekness. What one should understand by Uzbek was in fact a top-down decision conforming to (Soviet) ideological requirements. Ilkhamov notes that creating an Uzbek national state, allocating adequate territory and securing an Uzbek majority among the population was a "necessary but insufficient condition for forming a new Uzbek identity" (2003 p.290).

A second and equally critical factor that brought Uzbek identity into existence was the process of othering, of setting up boundaries between Uzbeks and non Uzbeks. This was performed by making women central to the process of Uzbek nation-building (Kamp, 2002; Northrop, 2001 and 2004). The question of defining the content of Uzbek identity was solved by defining who Uzbek women were. "Women [...] became normative figures of each distinct nationality" (Northrop, 2001 p. 199), because they stood for the domains of family, home and spirituality, where "the roots of cultural identity were taken to lie" (ibid.). In 1927 a campaign ("hujum", attack or onslaught) was launched by the Soviet authorities to eradicate female seclusion and modernize the "backward nations" of Central Asia (ibid., p. 191). By so doing, Uzbek identity came to be defined "through its distinctive patterns of gender relations and customs of female seclusion" (ibid., p.192). Defining who belonged to what nationality in border areas of mixed settlement (i.e. Osh) became possible by looking at gender roles and family relations and the fact that a paranji as opposed to other robes were worn.

The veil, or more precisely the paranji (a cotton robe with false sleeves) and the chachvon (a mesh of woven horsehair hiding face and neck), became a symbol of Uzbek identity. O'zbekchalar (Uzbek women) could be distinguished from Kazakh or Turkmen women, for example, by their wearing the paranji. Uzbek, by extension, were those men married to those Uzbek women[32]. This process of othering between women installed a sense of national consciousness that added a new dimension to an already complex identity matrix, Northrop notes (ibid., p.203). The local population did not stop to see itself as Muslim or women or men or Samarkandlik or Oshlik. However, a "new component, that of the Uzbek nation" was added to their intricate web of personal identity (ibid.). Though this goes beyond the focus of this study, Soviet strategies backfired as the unveiling (and subsequent repression of those who opposed to it) was met with widespread resistance by the population. Whether this should be seen as a symbol of anti-Soviet resistance or as the persistence of

[32]Problems arose in areas of mixed Uzbek-Tajik settlement, where Tajik women also wore the paranji. This was justified by referring to the fact that Tajik women not only did not know how to make their own, but also wore them in predominantly Uzbek areas, where they bought them. This pointed to Uzbek influence on Tajik society. Uzbek/Tajik distinctions did not present particular problems or require urgent solutions as long as Tajikistan remained part of the Uzbek SSR (1929) (Northrop, 2001 p. 201).

patriarchal oppression is an object of scholarly debate (Northrop, 2001 and 2004 and Kamp, 2002, for their respective positions).

A third dimension of nation-building is to be found in the indigenization policy (*korennizatsiya*). The term "korennizatsiya", Terry Martin argues, was part of the Soviet decolonizing rhetoric aimed at favouring the claims of indigenous peoples over settlers (2001 p. 74). "Soviet policy systematically promoted the distinctive national identity and national self-consciousness of its non-Russians populations" (ibid.). This meant favouring the promotion of cadres belonging to the titular nationality (after whom the republic was called), but also their national language through the promotion of symbolic markers of identity, namely folklore, museums, dress, food, literary works and historical events (ibid.). This resulted in the Uzbekification of the Uzbek SSR and, similarly the Tajikification of Tajikistan, and analogous processes in the contiguous republics. In Soviet times belonging to the titular group was enshrined with privileges that non titular communities did not benefit from. These manifested themselves in the fields of employment and career opportunities and advancement in the administration, an informal quota system and the establishment of institutions aimed at enhancing the position of the titular group. As noted earlier in these pages, the national-delimitation process left sizeable communities of co-ethnics within the borders of republics where they constituted "minorities", rather than the titular and privileged group.

Inter-republican boundaries remained essentially transparent during the Soviet period, and Uzbeks outside Uzbekistan performed "pilgrimages"[33] to Uzbekistan and by so doing they began to see themselves as Uzbeks (Kamp, 2002 p.264). Kamp observes that students, party members, government workers, came to Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital, from the regions because studying in Tashkent represented a channel to career advancement. Because of border transparency this also meant that Uzbeks from border regions in the neighbouring countries (i.e. Osh, Aravan, Kara-suu, Khujand, Penjikent, etc.) maintained closer links with Tashkent than with their respective republican capitals. Parents were more likely to send their children to receive Uzbek language education in Tashkent, rather than in the

[33]Kamp here borrows from Benedict Anderson's discussion of "pilgrimage of modern education" in modern colonial systems, where "student-pilgrims" made their way through various school institutions inward and upward from the periphery to the centre (Anderson, 1991).

predominantly Tajik city of Dushanbe. Geography played its part too, as the two mountain passes (Anzob and Ayni) make road transportation between northern Tajikistan and the rest of the country impossible except for a few summer months. Rail links were built in an awkward way, with the train leaving Leninabad in the north reaching Dushanbe only two days and several border points later. In sum, while each republic tended to promote the titular group and culture without much attention being paid to national minorities unless they had their own federal institutions in place, in practice members of nationalities settled in border regions could easily receive education, work and have frequent ties with the neighbouring republic (where co-ethnics lived) rather than interacting with the majority group. In other words contacts between Osh and Andijan or Tashkent were as frequent (if not more so) than those between Osh and Bishkek.

The second implication is that while Uzbeks occupied a privileged position in Soviet Uzbekistan, they played a secondary role in the life of the republics where they found themselves. In fact, as Kamp argues, Uzbeks "could expect access to positions and opportunities within Uzbekistan but did not find doors opened wide within the larger boundaries of the Soviet Union" (ibid., p. 273), not even if this meant next door, in Kyrgyzstan or to a minor extent Tajikistan[34]. Because different rules and practices applied outwith Uzbekistan, this suggests that in the end some form of boundary existed between republics. Independence brought with it significant change. If during the Soviet era "pilgrimages to Tashkent" represented a relatively easy opportunity for Uzbek co-ethnics to escape to republics where other groups were privileged, the establishment of five independent states in Central Asia cut Uzbeks abroad off from this opportunity.

2.3. The Soviet demise and independence

In Soviet Central Asia Uzbeks represented the largest national group: about one in three Central Asians (34%) declared Uzbek as his/her nationality in the 1989 census[35]. Uzbeks constituted the largest group in Uzbekistan (71.3%), and the largest non titular community in Tajikistan (23.5%) and Turkmenistan (9%), and the second-

[34]I return to this qualification in the next section.
[35]Vestnik Statistiki (10/1990). While not all the Central Asian republics have conducted new censuses, the high birth rate of the Uzbek population suggests that the share might have increased.

largest in Kazakhstan (2%) and Kyrgyzstan (12.9%), where they were outnumbered by Russians and by the titular group (Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, respectively).

Table 2.1. Uzbek distribution in Central Asia and the former Soviet Union

	Total population (1989)	**Uzbek population (1989)**	**% of republic's population (1989)**	**Total population (post-Soviet)**	**Uzbek population (post-Soviet)**	**% of republic's population (post-Soviet)**
Uzbekistan	19,810,077	14,142,475	71.3	24,430,192	18,959,577	78
Kazakhstan	16,464,464	332,017	2.0	14,953,126	370,663	2.4
Kyrgyzstan	4,257,755	550,096	12.9	4,822,938	664,953	13.8
Tajikistan	5,092,603	1,197,841	23.5	6,127,493	936,703	15.3
Turkmenistan	3,522,717	317,333	9.0	4,437,600	ca. 408,259[36]	9.2
Total – Central Asia	49,147,616	16,539,762	33.6	54,771,349	21,340,155	38.9
Elsewhere in (F)SU	236,594,895	158,063	-	-	-	-
Total	285,742,511	16,697,825	5.8	-	-	-

Source: Kazakhstan census data (1999), Tajikistan census (2000), Kyrgyzstan census (2000), Turkmenistan census (1995) and Uzbekistan 2000 estimates.

The ethnic distribution in the Central Asian countries has changed dramatically since independence (tables 2.1 and 2.2). Several factors have contributed to this, including the outflow of European (Slav mainly) groups, the migration of other smaller minority groups and especially the different growth rate of some ethnic groups (e.g. Uzbeks and Tajiks having the highest in the region), and state census policy. On the basis of the first census that four of the five countries have conducted after the Soviet collapse[37] Uzbeks composed approximately 78% of the population in Uzbekistan, 15.3% in Tajikistan, 13.8% in Kyrgyzstan, and 2.4% in Kazakhstan and 9.2% Turkmenistan (table 2.2). In Uzbekistan Uzbeks are overall equally distributed throughout the country, although the group's concentration appears to be higher in the three Ferghana Valley provinces (Andijan, Namangan,

[36]Though there seems to be a certain degree of consensus on the percentage of the Uzbek population, precise data on the exact number of Uzbek citizens living in the country are disputed. I rely on an estimate derived from the percentage.

[37]Uzbekistan has not conducted one and I rely on estimates. This sets the country apart from the other Central Asian republics, who have all conducted a post-independence census. One reason for this could arguably lie in the purpose the post-independence census served in the other republics, namely officially signalling the demographic dominance of the titular group, as in countries like Kazakhstan and to a minor extent Kyrgyzstan these constituted either a plurality or a bare majority. Uzbekistan's situation was remarkably different because Uzbeks have never faced the possibility of being outnumbered by other ethnic groups.

Ferghana), and the lowest in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan (3% of Uzbeks live there, which is still about 34% of the province population)[38].

Table 2.2 Distribution of Uzbeks in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia

	Share over the overall Uzbek population in 1989 (%)	Post-soviet period (%)
Uzbekistan	85.5	88.85 (+)
Tajikistan	7.25	4.38 (-)
Kyrgyzstan	3.33	3.12 (-)
Kazakhstan	2.0	1.73 (-)
Turkmenistan	1.92	1.92 (=)
Total	100	100

Source: Natsional'nyi Sostav naseleniya (Soviet census 1989, in Vestnik Statistiki, 10/90 to 7/91) and post-Soviet censuses of Turkmenistan (1995), Kazakhstan (1999), Kyrgyzstan (1999), and Tajikistan (2000).

The Ferghana Valley comprises just about 5% of the whole Central Asian region's territory, but is home to 20% of the region's population[39]. A few significant urban centres aside, the region is home to a considerable rural population. Besides Uzbekistani Uzbeks, nearly all Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks and a sizeable proportion of Tajikistani Uzbeks are concentrated in the valley. 32% of Uzbekistani Uzbeks live in the region (in the provinces of Ferghana, Namangan, and Andijan)[40], Uzbeks in Tajikistan are distributed more or less equally between Khatlon (35.2%) and Sughd (38.1%), the remaining being settled in the central areas (districts under republic subordination, mostly in the Hissar and Zarafshan valleys, and the capital Dushanbe[41]).

Table 2.3. Ferghana Valley provinces – Composition by nationality

	Uzbeks (%)	Tajiks (%)	Kyrgyz (%)	Russians (%)	Total (mln)
Uzbekistan	75.8	4.8	0.9	6.0	23.0
Ferghana Valley	84.2	5.0	3.2	3.0	6.2
Andijan	85.0	1.4	4.2	3.9	2.0
Ferghana	83.6	5.5	2.1	4.9	2.4
Namangan	85.1	8.8	1.1	1.9	1.7
Tajikistan	24.8	68.4	1.3	3.2	5.9
FV – Sughd	31.3	56.9	1.2	6.5	1.8

[38]Ilkhamov (2003).
[39]Lubin and Rubin (1999).
[40]Ilkhamov (2003).
[41]Natsional'nii sostav naseleniia Respubliki Tadzhikistan (2000).

Kyrgyzstan	14.2	0.8	60.3	15.7	4.7
FV	26.7	1.6	73.5	2.7	2.4
Osh	28.0	2.1	63.8	2.4	1.5
Osh city	40.9	0.4	67.3	3.3	0.9
Jalalabat	24.5	0.6	29.1	n.a.	0.2

Source: Lubin and Rubin (1999 p.37).

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised the centrality of the Soviet experience for the process of Uzbek identity formation. As Ilkhamov correctly argues, the formation of Uzbek identity should be viewed in close connection with the formation of the Uzbek SSR (2003, p.288). The national delimitation process and the following nationality policies defined the boundaries not just of the Uzbek SSR, but of Uzbek identity, as well as its content. This process was multi-dimensional and involved border-making, use of census, emphasis on language and gender, and indigenization policy.

Inter-republican boundaries, in particular, had a double effect. On the one hand they existed only on paper and did not have a practical impact on the life of people who could cross the border without today's hassles, send children to study in Tashkent when living outside the Uzbekistan SSR or even embark on a career in the Uzbekistan communist party. On the other hand living in one republic or another mattered because Soviet authorites adopted what Martin has referred to as affirmative action (2002), or positive discrimination in favour of titular groups. The logical implication was that non titular groups did not enjoy analogous privileges. If Uzbekistan was being Uzbekified in the Soviet period, likewise was Tajikistan or any other Central Asian republic undergoing a similar process.

CHAPTER 3

A strategic-relational approach to Uzbek political mobilization

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework used to investigate the dynamics of Uzbek mobilization. Six (sets of) concepts lie at the core of this research: ethno-political mobilization, collective identities, structural preconditions (the Soviet legacies) and political opportunity structure (POS), mobilising and de-mobilizing ideas, and the actor's strategic capacity. These represent the key analytical tools by means of which I hereafter explain the dynamics of Uzbek political behaviour since independence.

The chapter is structured as follows. First I define the concept of ethno-political mobilization, and discuss competing definitions. The scope of the section is to focus on a particular type of mobilization, that of ethnic minorities, as opposed to national mobilization, that is of groups constituting the demographic majority in a given region. While the contribution of cases on successful mobilization is beyond question, and have been subject to thorough research, unsuccessful cases are far less explored. This need not be so, as examples of the so-called "dogs that did not bark" can shed light on the motivations of the agents as well as on the alternative strategies used to voice demands. In the second section I critique the structuralist hegemony in scholarship on ethno-political mobilization. While certainly providing valuable insights into the internal dynamics of the environment within which the group organizes and mobilizes, the political opportunity structure and the explanations built around that concept (Eisinger, 1973; Kriesi, 2004; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1995) tend to overshadow the value of ideational and agential explanations of political mobilization. The group, the agent of mobilization, is rarely the subject of research (Barany, 2002a and 2002b; Commercio, 2004, Smith and Wilson, 1997) rather than an actor merely reacting to external stimuli. This study argues that a POS centred approach is helpful in analysing contexts where the structure of political opportunity

is shifting (opening) and therefore an intensification of mobilizational activities can be expected, but its contribution is limited when the POS is closing, such as in the Central Asian autocracies. Paying attention to structure only would induce one to believe that a group has de-mobilized out of lack of opportunities. While structural factors are undoubtedly important, as shown in chapters 4 and 5, it is only by looking at the leaders' strategies, the frames used, and the way the rank and file relate to the elites, that what initially appeared as mobilizational failure ("silent dog" or "dog that did not bark") appears to be a case of the "master who would not hear".

A convincing theoretical framework which pays attention to agency and ideas, as well as to structure is the strategic-relational approach (hereafter SRA), which is outlined in the second section of this chapter. Originally conceptualised in Bob Jessop's theory of the state (1990), and further developed by Colin Hay (2002), the SRA offers a solid and dynamic framework which can be fruitfully applied to explanations of Uzbek mobilization. Building on the contributions of Jessop and Hay I propose a theoretical framework which emphasises the relational nature of structural and agential factors; the strategically selective role of context, which both enables and limits the options available to the agent; the strategic nature of agency, and particularly that of political leadership in articulating frames, relating to the wider population and interacting with the surrounding environment; and the role of frames, particularly in mobilising and de-mobilizing ideas, as an interface between structure and agency.

3.1. Defining ethno-political mobilization

Considering that the term political mobilization has been applied to a wide range of political activities including riots, rebellions, demonstrations and electoral process, Birgitta Nedelmann notes that the question of "conceptual stretching" has finally affected mobilization (1987 p.185).

The origins of the concept can be traced back to the early 1960s, when Karl Deutsch defined it as "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour" (1961 p.494). According to Deutsch mobilization is something occurring to "large numbers of people in areas which

undergo modernization, i.e. where advanced non-traditional practices in culture, technology, and economic life are introduced and accepted on a considerable scale" (ibid., p.493). The concept, Deutsch continues, brackets together a series of processes of change, among which is also "the need for new patterns of group affiliation and new images of personal identity" (ibid.). In Deutsch's analysis, however, the question of identity appears as a residual category – in particular modernization is expected to make ethnic diversity irrelevant[42]. Deutsch's understanding is predominantly economic. Mobilization is primarily seen as a function of indicators such as (the expansion of) literacy, communications, voting participation, and per capita income. Urbanization, commercialization and industrialization are necessary preconditions for mobilization.

Karl Deutsch's economic approach to mobilization has been re-visited through the years to take into account the importance of cultural factors and group bonds in particular. According to Ragin's "ethnic re-active model" (1979 p.621), ethnic mobilization is a consequence of a competition between ethnic groups over roles and resources. Ragin maintains that no ethnic mobilization is likely to occur if the groups are geographically and functionally separated (they occupy different structural positions or economic niches). Equilibrium is disrupted by political and economic modernization, which acts in two ways (ibid., p.622): on the one hand modernization tends to reduce ethnic diversity, on the other it increases the likelihood of large scale ethnic mobilization. Interdependence leads to resistance and resistance develops around large scale identities. Ragin also suggests that individuals possess multiple identities at once, and the one accorded primacy over others will be used as basis for mobilization (ibid., p.623). What is interesting in Ragin's research is the emphasis, later abandoned in mobilizations studies and only recently re-discovered with respect to intra-group variation among Russian diasporic communities, on the level of variation of identity perceptions within the group itself (see next section).

Deutsch's equation between mobilization and modernization has come under increasing criticism in subsequent years. In fact, not only does the former not

[42]Walker Connor in his famous essay *Nation-building or Nation-destroying?* discusses thoroughly the shortcomings and inconsistencies of Deutsch's teleological conception of identity and ethnic diversity (1972).

necessarily entail the latter (Etzioni, 1968 p.248-49), but what characterises mobilization is not so much that it is a corollary of some other larger (macro) social and/or economic process, but rather that it moves from a condition in which a social unit is not in control of resources, to one where this control is somehow rapidly achieved (ibid.). Etzioni's critique to Deutsch contains two important additions to the understanding of the mobilizational process: the change in the re-distribution of power (from have-nots to haves) and the temporal dimension.

The centrality of power[43], or the change in its distribution in a political system, can hardly be overrated. Mobilization theory, Oberschall argues, refers "to the process of forming crowds, groups, associations, and organization for the pursuit of collective goals", [and] is concerned with how people with little individual power collectively resist to organized groups that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo (1973 p.102). Oberschall's definition entails an essentially confrontational understanding of the term which tends to exclude all those activities that while engaging the state are not confrontational with it. My understanding of mobilization draws instead from Birgitta Nedelmann's sociological theory of mobilization (1987). Nedelmann defines political mobilization as "the actors' effort to influence the existing distribution of power" (1987 p.181). What is crucial here is that action in this case comprises the actors' efforts to legitimise the existing distribution of power, and also encompasses activities aiming to redistribute power or reshape the basis of the power structure within a society.

Nedelmann identifies four key conceptual problems with the study of mobilization (ibid., p.183), which appear particularly pertinent to this study of Uzbek ethnic mobilization: the identity of actors of mobilization; the direction of processes of mobilization (which I discuss as part of actors' strategy); the definition of the activities involved in mobilization efforts; and the theoretical framework within which analysis of mobilization has been discussed. This chapter seeks to address these problem areas in order to develop a distinctive approach to explaining Uzbek political mobilization.

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[43]I find Lukes's three-dimensional conception of power particularly useful, especially in his emphasis (the "third dimension") on the control of the political agenda and the way some issues are kept out of the political process (2005 p.25), which well applies to both the authoritarian tendencies of the Central Asian elites as well as the attempts of the Uzbek leadership to achieve a hegemonic position within the community.

Before proceeding any further a terminological clarification is necessary here. Ethnicity and nationality tend to be used interchangeably in the literature. This is not surprising. Both nation and ethnic group, Conversi notes, refer to a group characterised by common descent (2004a p.25). However, I do not distinguish between the two on the basis of the degree of self-awareness achieved by the members of the group (as instead Conversi, ibid., and Connor, 2004 do), but on the basis of the "state-ness" question. A nation is therefore a group that has established a separate political formation (typically, the state), whereas the ethnic group has not. The degree of group identity is not in question here: nations are not superior to ethnic groups. The difference between the two is political, not cultural. The two should not be seen as incompatible or one as the natural evolution of the latter. The case of Uzbeks well illustrates this. In this study I therefore refer to Uzbeks as an ethno-national group, thereby including in the category both the Uzbek population commonly referred to as the Uzbek nation (the group constituting Uzbekistan's demographic majority) and those that are here referred to as Uzbek co-ethnics. Hence, I refer to Uzbek ethnic identity or mobilization when speaking of Uzbek co-ethnics, whereas by Uzbek national mobilization or identity I mean the analogous process occurring in Uzbekistan. For the purpose of this study I then define ethno-political mobilization as a form of mobilization where group identity [here, ethnic] is used as a base for collective action (Esman, 1994 p.28; Olzak, 1983 p.355; Tilly, 1991 p.574).

3.2. Identities as *explanans* and identities as *explanandum*

Arguing that successful mobilization largely depends on the sense of common belonging shared by the members of the group is nearly tautological (Giuliano, 2000). This is especially the case in respect of ethno-national mobilization, where support for nationalism depends on the presence of a type of common identity and on the strength of intra-group ties (Gorenburg, 2001 p.73). Identity, the "way individuals think of themselves and their place in society" (Schoeberlein-Engel, 1994 p.1), contributes to defining the possible ranges of action. It does so in a strategically selective way. As a matter of fact, not all identities are available at all times. Identifying what identities are available, and especially which among them are more

widely appropriated is therefore critical for understanding the path(s) actors would choose and undertake when mobilizing.

Traditionally studies on identity(-ies) can be divided between those considering identities as fixed and given (Geertz, 1973; Van Evera, 2001) and those that see them as modern inventions (Gellner, 1983) or social constructs (Anderson, 1991). A more helpful categorization of approaches to identity formation is that of Cole and Kandiyoti (2002 p.189) who distinguish between studies of the material and objective conditions for the rise of nationalism and those that look instead on how collective consciousness emerges. This study falls within the second approach. What matters here is not whether individuals meet some conditions (language, customs, religion or else) that would allow them to be considered as "real" Uzbeks. The focus of this study is not on the content of identity and of Uzbekness, but on the strength of identity perceptions and how Uzbek ethnic identity emerges and is maintained. In short, what is of interest here is not whether one is or is not Uzbek, but wheter one perceives himself/herself as such.

The interest in identity and ethnicity and their impact on political mobilization can be divided into two approaches: in the first identity constitutes the dependent variable (the *explanandum*), whereas in the second it is one of the explanatory variables of some other political phenomenon (the *explanans*). An important insight of the first type of contribution (identity as explanandum) is the emphasis on the variation, across groups and within groups of identity/-ies. The question of the Russian-speaking population in the former Soviet republics is a case in point. Two important points should be noted with respect to this. One is the importance of context in influencing which identity trajectory will dominate. In this regard Pål Kolstø suggests that it would be more appropriate to speak about fourteen diasporas rather than one (Russian) diaspora (2000). Kolstø has challenged the often implicit assumption that a cross-border minority on account of being an in-between category (divided territorially and culturally) might *ipso facto* become a bone of inter-state contention. Evidence has demonstrated otherwise, and Kolstø argues that diasporas should rather be seen as potential "bridge-builders" between different polities and different levels of attachment (to a culture, or to a state or *locale*).

A second point to be made regards intra-group variation, which has been examined only very recently (Poppe and Hagendoorn, 2001; Gorenburg, 2001). *Not with one voice* [Russians abroad speak], it is suggested (ibid.). The variation of identity perception within the same ethno-national group represents a significant contribution, considering the importance of the strength – perhaps even more than the content – of identity as a pre-requisite for mobilization. This problematic has been examined with regard to the Uzbek case. John Schoeberlein (1994, 1996) and Laura Adams (1999a, 1999b) have discussed the formation of Uzbek national identity and its internal heterogeneity and the many regional variations – some of which despite the regime's claims can be considered separate regional identities. Schoeberlein and Adams scratch the surface of the façade of unity and look at the plurality of identities. Adams locates the current national ideology of the Uzbek state along a continuum where Soviet schemas are still used to frame national identity (and national ideology, 1999a and 1999b). The content of or the emphasis on specific elements of Uzbekness might have changed in the post-independence era, Adams contends, but the modes by which national identity is portrayed and conveyed remain in many respects Soviet in form. Schoeberlein instead discusses the way identities at different levels (national, supra-national, sub-national, and local) are perceived and constructed from a bottom-up perspective. Despite traditions of multiplicity and overlapping identities, post-Soviet Central Asian regimes have by and large continued the Soviet policy of homogenizing plurality and eradicating diversity. The extent to which this policy has proved successful is tested empirically in the next chapter.

Identity has also been investigated from a more instrumental point of view. Research on cross-border communities in the former Soviet space (Bremmer, 1994; Gorenburg, 1999, 2003; Kolstø, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001; Melvin, 1995 and 2000; Smith and Wilson, 1997) has looked at the link between identity formation and political mobilization, with particular attention paid to the security implications at state or a regional level (Horsman, 1999b), the process of state-building and centre-regions relations (Cummings, 2000), border disputes and inter-state relations (Megoran, 2002d). Identity formation has been insightfully discussed within a neo-institutionalist perspective from an increasing number of scholars interested in

understanding how the ethno-federal structure of the Soviet Union impacted upon nation-building among the various populations across the former Soviet space[44]. Building on the shortcomings of "old structuralism" in predicting and explaining change, the new institutionalist agenda has made transformation and political change a primary concern (Peters, 1999; March and Olsen, 1996). The focus on identities and institutions as agents of change reflects this shift. In his study of minority mobilization among non-Russian communities in the Russian Federation Gorenburg seeks to address two key questions: how minority mobilization has developed as a political force, and how Soviet ethnic institutions affected the preference of the actors, shaped the message in search of popular support, the form that mobilization took, and the reaction from both elites and masses (2003: xi). Gorenburg argues that institutional explanations account for variations across cases (he discusses four: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, and Khakassia). Gorenburg challenges the view that political elites can kindle ethnic grievances and mobilize the masses at command. Rather it is cultural elites who spread the nationalist message from within urban intellectual settings to rural areas. Political elites, at least in the early stages of the mobilizational process, remain either passive or hostile. The importance of institutions in shaping identities is not restricted to the post-Soviet space, of course. Andre Lecours combines elitist and institutionalist explanations to account for the emergence of national, regional, and local identities in Belgium (2001). He sees institutional development and change as a crucial variable leading to the formation of a territorial identity in that country (ibid., p.52). Institutions, Lecours contends (ibid., p.53), shape - both directly and indirectly - territorial identities by "fixing, altering, or creating the boundaries of political communities".

3.3. The context of mobilization

Chandra's observation that identities have traditionally been treated as exogenous (2004), fixed and unchanging variables particularly applicable to a large majority of studies on mobilization, and especially to those adopting a structural approach, the hegemonic paradigm in the field (Barany, 1998, 2002a and 2002b; Commercio,

[44] On new institutionalism see Laitin (1998), Martin (2002), Suny and Martin (2001), and Slezkine (1994).

2003; Gorenburg, 1999, 2001, 2003; McAdam et al, 1996; Smith and Wilson, 1997, Olzak, 1983; Tarrow, 1991 and 1998; Tarrow et al., 2001).

While the process of identity formation of the group in question certainly matters, for those scholars the concept of political opportunity structure (POS) constitutes the key pillar upon which the framework is built[45]. The concept of political opportunity structure was first introduced by Peter Eisinger in his discussion of the conditions under which revolts are more likely to occur (Eisinger, 1973 and Tarrow, 1991 p.14). According to Eisinger the political environment imposes constraints on political action and/or facilitates it. The political opportunity structure (POS) refers to the:

> "dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure" (Tarrow, 1996 p.41).

Tarrow points to the state's policies as a crucial factor in expanding or contracting political opportunities for action. "States set the boundaries of this interaction by defining the boundaries of the permissible; [...] by facilitating one group of insurgents and repressing another; and by sometimes co-opting protesters, sometimes pre-empting their demands, and –more rarely- giving up the ghost" (ibid.). The importance of the state is beyond question, as it sets the stage for subsequent action, and by conceptualising and implementing policies defines the limits of what is legitimate and what is not (although this does not determine what is possible and impossible). Tarrow offers a categorization of the conditions under which opportunities are more likely to expand or contract (ibid., p.15):

- opening up of access to participation (relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system);
- shiftings in ruling alignments;
- the availability of influential allies (within the elite circle);
- and the presence of cleavages within and among elites.

[45]A different type of structural factor is represented by the Soviet legacy, which constitutes the background context to post-Soviet mobilization. The significance of the Soviet experience has been discussed in chapters 1 (briefly) and 2 and its role in shaping Uzbek mobilization will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The main argument of this model is that mobilization occurs when changes (an opening of the opportunity structure) render the political system more vulnerable or receptive to challenge (Tarrow, 1991 p.8). Though I do not dispute the general usefulness of the POS approach, I find its insights more applicable to polyarchies than to authoritarian settings. The concept of POS is helpful to explain what happens when a window of opportunity opens in the system, i.e. when the system is either liberalising or collapsing. In cases where the system is either closed or semi-closed, the heuristic usefulness of the POS is more limited.

This study departs from the POS approach in two main ways. First it critiques the state-centric nature of the political opportunity structure. While this may be appropriate to explaining state-based movements such as those concerning civil rights or environmentalist issues in western settings, the heuristic potential is much diminished when one tries to apply it to authoritarian settings and also to instances of trans-nationalism and diaspora, as well as the specific case of co-ethnics. The four dimensions of POS are all state-based and implicitly assume a clear inside-outside divide between the domestic political process and the international environment.

A particularly successful attempt to combine different levels of analysis (state and sub-state) as well as the dynamics interplay between different fields of action, is that of Rogers Brubaker (1996). Brubaker's "triadic nexus" refers to the interplay between the national minority, the host state, and the external homeland. With states such as the Soviet successor republics undergoing comprehensive redefinition of ideas of state and nation and with millions of stranded individuals on the "wrong" side of the border with kins elsewhere, a state-oriented approach such as the POS is of limited use. Horsman's (1999b) research on the interplay between inside and outside in Central Asia suggests the POS should open up to include (f)actors that go beyond the state, namely sub-state actors (ethnic communities). In this study I propose it should include the role of the kin state (the alleged external homeland). Naturally I do not assume it to play a critical role in the mobilizational process of a minority group at all times. This has to be verified empirically.

Scholars have recently attempted to go beyond the inherent staticity of the POS model. Tarrow correctly notes that political opportunity structures are preconditions for action, but these are opportunities, and as such they need to be

seized. In other words, context might not exert a deterministic influence over conduct. What this approach suggests is that between structure and individual agency operate "organizations" (vehicles of mobilization) through which groups seek to mobilize. McCarthy (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996 p.3) defines mobilizing structures as "the collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action". McCarthy seeks to map different organizational structures and relates them to different contexts (countries) and different outcomes.

What counts as a mobilising structure has been an object of controversy between two opposing approaches, with formally structured and instutionalised organizations and loose movements with less rigid hierarchical structure at opposite ends of an imaginary spectrum. Where parties are allowed to compete more or less freely, present and challenge programs, formulate strategies, and have any chance to win office, then an approach as the one conceived by Nettl (1967), with the exclusive emphasis on parties as main political actors, would be adequate. Some contexts do not allow for political organizations to compete freely for office or to challenge the established regime. Spaces for independent political action can be narrow and hardly any political action can be carried out without the knowledge, let alone the approval, of the authorities. Ethnically-based political parties (parties whose membership is based on ethnic criteria and whose agenda consists primarily of defending and advancing the interests of a particular ethnic community), are banned in all the Central Asian countries. In such cases, it might be preferable to shift attention away from formal party structures, and look instead at other types of organizations that may be available, typically the national-cultural centres. These are no marginal phenomenon. Before the Soviet collapse nationalist movements originated within the ranks of small intellectual circles and culture/language revivalist movements (i.e. Birlik in Uzbekistan). Studies on nationalist mobilization have (Beissinger, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003) underscored the role as initiators or agitators played by cultural revivalist movements in the early stages of mobilization. These groups, originally founded by small circles of intellectuals, campaigned in favour of language rights and native language education.

At the same time one should look at cultural centres with circumspection. Because they are the most visible actors – often the only ones – or they have access to authorities, does not make them the only intermediaries between the authorities and the group. Nor are they necessarily perceived as legitimate actors by the community itself. However, looking at their structure, their membership, leadership and strategy offers a particularly interesting vantage point on the way the group leaders relate with both the wider community and the state. By looking at national-cultural centres, it is possible to learn more about the group and its programmes and strategies. Noting that ethno-political mobilization has surprisingly received scant attention in the field of ethnic politics studies (2002 p.278), Barany argues that learning more about the mobilising group helps in assessing its chances for successful mobilization. Comparing organizational structures, their adaptations to changing context, their goals and strategies appears a particularly insightful approach for accounting for variations in effects and influence on policies, as studies on Roma in Eastern Europe have shown (Barany, 2002a and 2002b; Vermeersch, 2002). The choice activists make regarding the form the movement will take is undoubtedly important. In this respect McCarthy notes that despite the large range of organizational forms available to activists, they tend to adopt those more familiar to them (1996 p.148).

3.4. Cultural framing and the role of ideas

The study of cultural framing (Snow et al., 1986; Zald, 1996;) represents a refreshing alternative to the structuralist hegemony, and privileges the "strategic framing of injustice and grievances, their causes, motivations, and associated templates for collective action" (Zald, 1996 p.261) over the political opportunity structure. The rediscovery of the importance of cognitive factors can be ascribed partly to the eponymous turn in social psychology in the 1970s. Goffman's work on the impact of changes in socio-psychological context on (possibilities for) behaviour (1974) has opened up a new way of approaching and investigating political behaviour and participation. Snow (Snow et al, 1986) has drawn on Goffman and further elaborated the concept of framing ("generation and diffusion by movement actors of mobilising and counter-mobilising ideas and meanings", Snow and Benford, 1992) in a way that

has allowed us to understand how processes of interpretation, classification and characterization occur on both the individual and collective level.

The contribution of this perspective has been extremely valuable because it seeks to bridge an overtly structural approach with an emphasis on social psychological factors and investigates the alignment between individual and movement interpretative schemas. Borrowing on Goffman's concept of framing (1974), the proponents of this theoretical framework attempt to identify the link (the frame alignment) between individual and collective interpretative orientations (Snow et al., 1986 p.464). Zald critically suggests that the relationship between framing and movements/political behaviour should not be imagined as uni-linear, but as recursive, with frames structuring social action, and being structured by it (Zald, 1996 p.269).

Peter Vermeersch has applied the concept of framing to the study of ethnic mobilization of the Roma population in Central Europe (2001). Vermeersch sees ethnic mobilization as a crucial dimension of ethnic identity that deeply affects the self-definition of the group and its boundaries (ibid., p.16). He does not enter the discussion of "what Roma identity is" (content of identity), but rather focuses on "the process of how this ethnic identity functions as a cognitive frame for political mobilization" (instrumental use of identity). Vermeersch's contributions are many-fold. A first major insight from the broadly defined ideational approach is a conception of the relation between social identification and collective action as a two-way relationship. Identification constitutes the basis for collective action by structurally defining the available range of identity options (since collective action presupposed a shared identity among the members of the group). At the same time it is structured by action. In other words, collective action feeds back into the structure, by re-defining the boundaries between actors, and by creating and re-creating new senses of belonging. A second contribution to be found in Vermeersch's research is the discursive approach to ethnic mobilization. What is important is how the key political actors construct ethnic identity in public discourse. The Central Asian countries constitute a particularly interesting case to compare and contrast the use of identity labels in the public discourse (do authorities refer to Uzbeks or Russias as diasporas, and what are the consequences that should be drawn from this) with the

self-categorization of ethno-national groups (how do Uzbeks think of themselves, also with regard to the state of residence?).

Studies on national mobilization have emphasized how, for a movement to be successful, "it is not enough for it to acquire organizational resources and a cadre of dedicated activists" (Gorenburg, 2003 p.11). In fact, while a focus on resources (identities, grievances, demands) and structural constraints (environmental factors, domestic and external institutional actors) may be sufficient to explain the emergence or absence of a national movement (Ukudeeva-Freeman, 2003 p.99), it does not provide convincing evidence to make sense of variations in levels of mobilization *across* and *within* cases. What needs to be taken into account is first the extent to which the movement (or its leadership) is able to create an idea or set of ideas among its target population that it has been subject of past injustices, or that taking part in the movement is worthwhile because of future positive payouts; second, the extent to which the interpretation of ideas, perceptions and beliefs (frames) would resonate across the group Frames can be defined as:

"interpretive schemes that condense and simplify a person's experience by selectively highlighting and encoding certain situations, objects, events and experiences" (Gorenburg, 2003 p.11).

Scholars of framing theory have pointed to the fact that for political action to take place, a previous change in ideas and frames has to take place. A change in action in other words is preceded by a change in ideas. For an ideational change to manifest itself, though, it is necessary that the set of ideas, perceptions or beliefs is articulated, generally –though not exclusively - from movement leaders (who frame a question) and make it resonate across the rest of the group. At that stage framing serves two main purposes (Gorenburg, 2003):

- to convince potential followers that their situation is intolerable;
- and that political action can change their situation for the better, and that participation in the movement is the most effective way of bringing about such a change.

Drawing on the contributions of social movement research and from collective action framing theory in particular, Jamilya Ukudeeva-Freeman has convincingly developed the concept of a "mobilising idea" as a useful analytical tool to explore the

extent to which an idea or a set of ideas are shared by members of a group, who are then ready to mobilize around that very same idea. Given that the presence of grievances or the opening of an opportunity in the structural context does not per se generate political action, the leader has "to present a concept, vision, or an idea, that resonates among the people and gets people to be sympathetic with the movement goals" (2003 p.99). A *mobilizing idea* can be defined as:

"...an action-oriented set of beliefs that unifies people around itself for a common goal. [It] inspires people for action, legitimates leaders' actions, and expresses conviction about how things should be". (ibid.)

A mobilizing idea, Ukudeeva-Freeman continues, is both an *action plan* and also a *solution to problems* (which makes it similar to Gorenburg's understanding of cultural frames). The movement would be over, she contends, when leaders can no longer recruit people because their ideas and goals do not resonate with them. The case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks also shows, however, that the end of a movement is nigh when a leader is perceived (by the rest of the group) to be articulating the idea instrumentally, for his own ambitions and interests, rather than in the interests of the group.

In this study I also seek to take the study of the development of core ideas among potential mobilizers further through the concept of a *de-mobilizing idea*. By de-mobilizing idea I refer to:

a set of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes which shape the direction of mobilization towards integration with the institutions and other groups of the country of residence, de facto going against the commonly held expectation that political mobilization is in its own nature confrontational with authorities.

The concept of a de-mobilizing idea emphasises how ideas and frames are quintessentially relational. The same set of beliefs can simultaneously act as a powerful "mobilizer" in one direction, and demobilize the very same group in a different respect. The case of Islam and the relation between religion and nationality experienced by the Uzbek population well illustrates this: on the one hand Islam constitutes a potentially powerful mobilizing idea (as religion), and on the other it

represents a constraining force for mobilization along national lines (as anti-national or supra-national ideology). As Ukudeeva-Freeman, Schatz and Gorenburg have shown in their research, these visions (mobilizing ideas) do not come out of nowhere. Because they need to be popularized among the target population, they need to be familiar to resonate (especially if mobilization aims to be a short term rather than a longer term project). "To be successful, nationalist leaders had to frame their demands in language and imagery that could resonate with the population" (Gorenburg, 2003 p.12). This means fully taking into account the legacy of seventy and more years of Soviet political order which, throughout the twentieth century, "decisively molded the perceptions, beliefs, and identities of minority ethnic group members" (ibid.). The potentially successful nationalist leaders would be those who crafted their message in a way to (cor)respond to the political ideas of the population.

This study explores the type of frames which throughout the post-independence period have emerged in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and seeks to determine which among those have been consolidated among the members of the group. It also highlights how Uzbeks themselves have framed their own situation and their position in the newly established polity. The following questions are therefore discussed:

- What type of (mobilizing) ideas are developed by the Kyrgyzstani/Tajikistani and Uzbek leadership? What types of *repertoires of frames* are available to Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani Uzbeks?
- How are they received? Are they appropriated by and do they resonate across the larger Uzbek community?

3.5. Agents of mobilization: The elites and the masses

Frames do not emerge spontaneously, but require some degree of human agency, that of elites actors who, because of their status or position in the political system, have the material as well as ideational resources to frame a particular condition and mobilise the wider community. With respect to ethno-political mobilization in the former Soviet space, the role of elites as ethnic entrepreneurs - elite actors that frame a grievance or demand in ethnic terms and mobilize the community around it - has received particular attention by Melvin (1995, and 2001), Laitin (1998), Treisman (1997), Tsypanov (2001), and Hale (2000), and Hechter (1975). Overall it seems that

scholarship concerned with other geographical areas has been more attentive to organizations rather than individual actors as agents of mobilization.

Agency here refers to political action, and can be defined as "the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously and, in so doing, to attempt to realise his or her intentions" (Hay, 2002 p.94). As Hay observes, agency is a multi-dimensional concept, and encompasses both individual and collective actors. I therefore adopt here an inclusive definition of agency, which comprises both leaders and elites, as well as the organization itself, here understood as the "collective vehicles, formal and informal, through which people mobilise" (McCarthy, 1996 p.3[46]), and the rank and file, those whom the leaders are supposed to mobilise. This should take into account both the role of leaders and the role of the followers.

The question of how structure and agency relate is one of the most debated issues in political science and eventually boils down to the collective action problem. "[U]nless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests" (Olson, 1971 p.2). In these terms, collective action and hence group mobilization appear a mirage. After the publication of Mancur Olson's *Logic of collective action* (1971), several authors, including Olson himself, have suggested possible ways to overcoming the problem of collective action (of which free-riding is but one) and of the provision/securing of the collective good, most notably selective incentives (Olson, 1982; Frohlich and and Oppenheimer, 1975). Among the most important contributions coming from intentionalism is the reminder that individual behaviour is not entirely the product of social structures. Agents have interests, preferences, motives, goals, and strategies to achieve them. Individuals can choose. It is the extent of choice that is disputed. Overall, as it will be argued in the coming section, it seems "implausible either that individuals are fully autonomous or that their actions are determined completely by social structure" (ibid. p.83). The intentionalist model has emphasised the role of political entrepreneurs, who for personal gain, profit, or whatever other reason co-ordinate collective action. This research does not share the view of individuals as motivated by self-interest and

[46]However, McCarthy tends to consider collective actors as mere mobilizing structures rather than actors in their own right.

capable of ranking outcomes, acting rationally and with emotional detachment (Ward, 1995 p.79), but considers beliefs and perceptions as of critical importance when it comes to making sense of the actors' behaviour. The question of the collective action issue poses a particularly crucial problem for the study of mobilization: the question of agency, which appears completely overshadowed by context in mobilization studies.

Mark Beissinger notes that the vast majority of studies on nationalism are essentially "teleological" (2002 p.9), relying on structural explanations. The possibility of an agential explanation of nationalist mobilization has been largely neglected. Or, as Beissinger puts it: *"the ideas that identities could be defined in the context of agency or that nationalism is both a structured and structuring phenomenon has not received sufficient attention"* (my italics). Discussing Miroslav Hroch's work and tripartite division of nationalist mobilization in nineteenth century Europe, Beissinger notes how the process from stage B (emergence of nationalist elites) to phase C (mass movements) is largely ignored[47]. Beissinger is among the few scholars dealing with nationalist mobilization who pay attention to epistemological and ontological questions. Moreover, in spite of both instrumentalist and primordialists on the one hand (for whom action follows from structurally pre-determined identities and interests), and constructivists on the other (with their attention to the discursive processes of identity construction) have not "interrogated the ways in which collective action itself may be constitutive of nationhood" (ibid. p.11). The view of nationalism as both a cause *and product of* action (ibid.) is a major contribution from Beissinger, and opens new ways of looking at nationalist mobilization beyond the view of structural lenses.

Closely related to the question of agency is the question of leadership. There is a good degree of overlap between the categories of elites and leaders. Leaders are generally part of the elite group. What distinguishes them is the fact that elites are defined by their being in a position to influence the political process, whereas leaders are actually key strategic decision-makers. In Barany's work (1998) leadership comes into play as a triggering factor of mobilization. The importance of a leader is hard to overestimate, notes Barany (ibid. p.310-11). In fact, a leader can determine

[47] Phase A consists of cultural revivalism within intellectual circles (Hroch, 1985).

the success or failure of the nationalist organization. Barany observes how a leader might emerge from a formal process of selection, or alternatively be naturally selected because of academic qualifications, social standing, or economic position. (ibid.) Drawing on Breuilly, he points to the crucial role of the leader, which is to "forge links with a population hitherto uninvolved in politics" (ibid.). March and Olsen identify two possible roles for leaders: the broker and the educator (1984 p.739). A broker "provides information, [and] identifies possible coalitions" (ibid.) in practice the role involves a process of coalition-building (ibid.)[48]. Alternatively a leader operates as "educator", expected to manipulate worldviews, redefine meanings and stimulate commitments (ibid.)[49]. Barany sees leadership as an indispensable component for groups if they are to to make credible claims (2002a p.284).

3.6. What counts as mobilization? A "non-event" approach

In his seminal work on nationalist mobilization in the late Soviet period Mark Beissinger considers both successes and failures of nationalist mobilization (2002), though he primarily discusses the former. Anomalous or mis-predicted cases (ibid. p.203 and 222) include unpredicted successful mobilization (i.e. Abkhaz, Gagauz, Bashkir, Tuvans, and Turkmen), but also the failures, examples of groups expected to mobilise that actually did not (i.e. Belarusians, Uzbeks and Volga Tatars).

Beissinger distinguishes between five types of political mobilization according to the outcome of the mobilizational effort: irrelevancy; failure of action; failure of mobilizational effect; mobilizational failure, but issue success; and mobilizational success (205). In the case of irrelevancy, a nationalistic frame is never contemplated, whereas in cases of failure it might be desirable, albeit impossible. In order to establish whether a particular frame is actually successful, Beissinger distinguishes between mobilizational success ("the wide resonance of nationalist action within society"), issue success ("adoption of movement aims as basis for state policy"), and political success ("gaining control over the state") (ibid., p.204).

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[48]The capacity of the leader to build broad coalitions is equally important. The case of Roma in Eastern Europe shows that a clear obstacle to a movement's success lies, along with a lack of leader, in intra-elite competition and rifts as well.

[49]March and Olsen note that this view is more in line with the new institutionalist approach (1984 p.739).

Alongside the five possible outcomes outlined by Beissinger, a sixth case is also possible: *de-mobilization*. Discussing the policies of the authoritarian junta in Chile during the 1970s, Karen Bremmer (1980) is among the few theorists that concentrate on de-mobilization as a main object of study, rather than as a default category. De-mobilization can be defined as the process through which subordinate groups lose their capacity to pursue collective goals (ibid., p.276). Bremmer's contribution is important as she focuses on authoritarian contexts (Latin America) and does not assume mobilization as a one way irreversible process. Bremmer correctly notes the mutability of participation, organization and consciousness within a given group and contends that sudden shifts from passivity to activity (or vice versa) occur in response to changing political conditions (ibid.). The study of de-mobilization is important as it underscores two important dimensions: social control (Lustick, 2002), as operated by the state attempting to restrict channels of political participation, and the costs of such an operation. De-mobilization is actually a double-edged sword. Built on policies of repression and coercion by the Chilean junta, one aim of the de-mobilizing strategy lies in eliminating potential sources of political opposition. This, however, is just one side of the coin, Bremmer observes (ibid., p.293-94). De-mobilization carries significant costs as well. The regime's base of support is thereby narrowed and opportunities for channelling and institutionalising political control limited (ibid., p.296). This can potentially lead to further alienation and further resistance from the excluded or marginalised groups. Where de-mobilization might appear as deliberate state policy to control opposition, in the long term a by-product can potentially be increased mobilization and instability.

Mobilization is more likely to occur in times of opening political opportunities, as POS theorists argue. This lead a large number of authors to analyse waves (Tarrow, 1998), cycles of protests (Tilly, 1991) and tides of nationalist mobilization (Beissinger, 2002) as manifestations of mobilization. This is one way (the most common) of approaching forms of mobilization. It is also possible to focus on a quiet politics of nationalism, opposed to a "noisy" one (Beissinger, 2002 p.26), which focuses on a low volume voice as a channel for its demands and grievances, and it is on this type of mobilization that this research concentrates.

Kathleen Collins defines this form of ethno-national mobilization as a "non event" (2003 p.172). Though perhaps the term non event may appear too stark and suggest a lack of action and passivity, on the other hand it captures a form of mobilization that escapes the traditional quantitative analysis of mobilization, thereby requiring a different theoretical and methodological framework. Lack of barking does not imply total inertia. Quite the contrary, perhaps more useful activities are performed far from the centre of the political stage. Hence, a study of authoritarian regimes can give important insights into what the dynamics of political participation and mobilization are when opportunity structures are narrow or subject to strong institutional constraints. It is in such circumstances that it appears more useful to explore the everyday, routine, manifestations and practices of political behaviour rather than focusing on exceptional events or more conventional expressions of political mobilization. Of course I do not dispute the significance of events or contentious episodes, such as the June 1990 Osh-Uzgen clashes in Kyrgyzstan, or the 1992-97 civil war and the failed incursion of the former Tajikistani Army Commander Mahmud Khudoyberdiev in 1997 in northern Tajikistan. However, I find a focus on the strategies and forms of Uzbek mobilization more suitable than a study of events and episodes.

On a methodological level one should note the limited insights that can be drawn from electoral politics in semi-closed societies. Studies of voting patterns among national minorities in East Central Europe (Hungarians, Roma, Russians, Turks), and among non-Russian communities in the Russian Federation have built on vast amounts of data, i.e. opinion polls, election surveys, and especially voting patterns and electoral politics. This is not feasible in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (and these represent no exception in the post-Soviet landscape). In fact, ethnically-based political parties are not permitted in those countries, and minority groups have to look at other forms of political organizations (cultural associations, as noted) to channel their demands. The fact that in any case this might be one of the few, if not the only official mobilising structure available in some polities calls for an inclusive understanding of what constitutes a political organization. The practical difficulties involved in collecting data on the topic deserve a further mention. This is due to both the irregular nature of the publications in the region (missing issues, suspended

publications), but also the politically sensitive nature of the topic (inter-ethnic relations) that is less amenable to public discussion[50].

3.7. A strategic-relational approach (SRA) to ethno-political mobilization

Explanations of ethno-political mobilization have rarely addressed the structure and agency problem, though by relying on structural or agential explanatory variables they have indirectly and implicitly touched on the problem. Mark Beissinger's study of *Nationalist Mobilization and the Soviet Collapse* (2002) constitutes the most notable exception to this. Beissinger draws from the "morphogenetic approach" (MGA), as developed by Margaret Archer (1988 and 1996). One of the main strengths of Archer's MGA lies in the importance it confers to ideational factors in explaining social life. Culture becomes a meta-theoretical concept alongside structure and agency. The concept of "sequencing" (temporality) occupies an equally important place in the framework and is of course central to Beissinger's argument on the tides of nationalism and the demonstrative effect that successful tides had on other movements. Additionally, time does not appear as a medium through which events take place, but as an important variable (McAnulla, 1998 p.8). "Structures, as emergent entities are not only irreducible to people, they pre-exist them, and people are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties which mean they either reproduce or transform social structures rather than create them" (Archer, quoted in McAnulla, ibid.).According to the MGA structure and agency should be seen as irreducible to one another and operating at different moments in time.

This study builds on Beissinger's approach, but seeks to develop a *strategic-relational approach* (SRA) to ethno-political mobilization. Building on Bob Jessop's theory of the state where he seeks to overcome state-centred and societal explanations of the state (1990, 2001) the SRA has been further developed by Colin Hay (1995, 2002) into a comprehensive approach to political analysis. Conceived within a critical realist ontology, the SRA argues for a dialectical understanding of structure and agency. In other words, "layers of structure act to condition agency by defining the range of strategies which might be deployed by agents in the attempt to

[50]See the methodological appendix for more on this.

realise their intentions" (McAnulla, 1998 p.4). The strategic-relational approach represents the most convincing explanatory framework conceived to go beyond the dualism of structural and agential explanations in political analysis. Two concepts appear crucial to the approach and also to the framework which I adopt to make sense of Uzbek political mobilization: strategic action and the strategic selectivity of context (Hay, 2002 p.127)[51]. Through the SRA Hay makes three main contributions that advance our understanding of political processes. First, he contends that the distinction between structure and agency is purely analytical. In contrast to Archer's MGA which purports an ontological distinction between the two, Hay argues that not only the two do exist simultaneously, but that they are in fact empirically interwoven. This means, for example, that whether some process or actor is structure or agency depends on one's vantage point, or better on what one is seeking to explain. This is particularly relevant to explaining the dynamics of political transformation in Central Asia. If, for example, one is searching for explanations of divergent trajectories of authoritarianism given a similar regional context, a president's leadership would appear as example of political agency reacting to and interacting with the context. However, as is the case here, when one seeks to make sense of ethnic mobilization, presidential leadership appears as a critical dimension of the context which enables or constrains Uzbek political action. Though it is the choices of Akaev and Rakhmonov that alter the political opportunity structure, from the perspectives of the Uzbek community this in practice acts as structural change.

Second, if their existence is at the same time simultaneous and relational (they are mutually constitutive), there is no need to emphasise the temporal dimension in the same way as Archer or Beissinger do. Certainly the MGA suits Beissinger better as he is interested in an event analysis of protests and demonstrations across space (the whole former Soviet territory) and time (1986-1991). However, given the different circumstances within which Uzbek mobilization unfolds time does not appear as central to the explanatory framework. This does not mean diminishing the importance of time. Time matters, because what appears as structure at one time is a product of the transformative or reproductive effect of previous action.

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[51]Hay uses context and structure, and conduct and agency interchangeably, and so does this study.

The third contribution, which Hay actually shares with the MGA, relates to the effects of conduct, particularly the feedback into structure. Here, action can yield two distinct effects: it can either transform or reproduce context, generating change (or what Archer calls morphogenesis) or maintain or even reinforce structure (morphostasis). Again, this is particularly applicable to making sense of Uzbek mobilization which is not necessarily directed at altering the context, but at maintaining the status quo (preventing change). How does this take place? Here two key concepts are of fundamental explanatory value: strategic action and strategically selective context. Let us start with the latter. Context, or structure, is strategically selective in that it favours certain strategies over others as a means to realise intentions or preferences. As Hay notes, not all outcomes are possible in any given situation, which means that context defines the range of possible strategies available to the agent. It does not, however, determine conduct and ultimately the outcome. "Outcomes", Hay observes, "are structurally undetermined" (2002 p.129). This bears resemblance to the political opportunity structure where opportunities need to be recognised in order to be seized. Actors have preferences, beliefs and intentions, and are "are presumed to be strategic, [...] capable of devising and revising means to realise them" (ibid., p.130). Actors are not just strategic, but are also reflexive, and learn and adapt their behaviour on the basis of both the outcome of previous action and perceptions (awareness) of context, in terms of the constraints and opportunities this imposes. Actors, on the basis of the available knowledge (correct or incorrect, tendentially incomplete), formulate their strategies and strive to overcome the constraints posed by the context or to take the opportunities provided by context itself. One note of caution is necessary. Strategic capacity or strategic selectivity should *not* be equated with rational choice. As Hay clarifies, strategy involves:

> "the selection of objectives and the search for the most appropriate means to achieve those objectives within a particular context at a particular moment in time" (Hay, 1995 p.190).

James Jasper makes the distinction between a strategic approach and rational choice theory even clearer. Jasper rejects "[...] any kind of rationality independent of cultural and institutional contexts [...] All of their [actors'] intentions, understandings, and actions are filtered through cultural and psychological lenses"

(2004 p.6). It follows that if "structured arenas shape players, players' decisions, and the outcomes of interactions", one should not "assume effects without looking at the choices made", choices that emerge from the "full panoply of goals, meanings, and feelings" that actors have (ibid.).

Jasper also emphasises that strategic choices have to be made by someone, hence the attention here to ethno-political entrepreneurs in the role of leaders, whom Morris and Staggenborg define as "strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate to social and political movements" in shaping the group's strategy and the course of political action (2004). Scholarship on post-communist Eurasia has dedicated increasing attention to the choices of elites. Less explored is the extent to which leadership matters to the dynamics of collective mobilization in the cases of marginal groups, such as ethno-national communities who find themselves in newly established polities. A noteworthy exception to the dearth of research available on the role leadership plays in the mobilization of marginal groups is Zoltan Barany's comparative research into Roma "ethnic mobilization without pre-requisites" in Central and Eastern Europe (1998; 2002a and 2002b). In order to understand mobilization and the causes for its success or failure, it is important to "learn more about the mobilizing group itself". An indispensable element to the credibility of a group's political claim is the "availability of a pool of leaders who enjoy some measure of authority in the ethnic community, who are capable of furnishing the group with some organizational form" (Barany, 2002a p.71-72).

Operationalising the SRA

It is now time to turn the theoretical concepts outlined above into operational ones. The key dependent variable is Uzbek ethno-political mobilization, particularly the forms and strategies adopted by Uzbek actors. The research proceeds thematically, building on an analytical distinction between the concepts of structure, frames and agency. As noted by Hay, this does not imply that one should also expect the various factors to be empirically distinct as well. In practice they are intertwined, and feed into each other. For purposes of analytical clarity, however, they are examined separately.

Structure. First, context is taken into consideration. Here I distinguish between background and proximate factors, both in terms of the historical development of such factors (when they take place) and of how swiftly they can change. The background factors comprise what is generally referred to as the "Soviet legacy". However, because this is not an easily measurable concept, I opted for operating a practical distinction between the political, economic, and cultural realms. By so doing, I hope the impact of each will be more easily observable. Furthermore, I also chose to adopt the plural form, and hereafter refer to the structural pre-conditions as "Soviet legacies". The different types of Soviet legacies are discussed with reference to the ethnic mobilization literature. With regard to the political legacies the thesis that the establishments of ethno-federal institutions constituted a crucial resource for mobilization (Cornell, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003; Hale, 2000) will be subject to scrutiny. Institutionalised autonomy has played a major role in the mobilizational process during the late Soviet and early post-Soviet era. This section also introduces the post-Soviet political developments in the two countries under investigation, thus bridging between Soviet (chapter 2) and post-Soviet periods (chapter 4 and following). Here the following questions are examined: What type of institutional legacies did Uzbeks living in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan inherited from the Soviet period? Did they benefit from institutionalised forms of autonomy? Does this make mobilization more or less likely?

A discussion of economic factors highlights the extent to which Soviet economic specialization and command economy have left a distorted effect on the region's economic system. I do not enter here into the discussion of the legacy of cotton monoculture and the distortions that this caused on Central Asian economies, but look at how the areas of Uzbek settlement fit within the respective state economic system. Building on literature on the economic causes of ethnic mobilization, the section aims to establish whether, given that under Soviet times, southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan gravitated around Uzbekistan's economy, this is still the case. Scholars like Henry Hale (2000) view relative economic wealth (compared to other areas in the polity) as a resource that can be used to mobilize the population. The extent to which this may still be the case, but also the level of development (or underdevelopment) will show whether insights

from the literature on economic causes of ethnic mobilization are applicable to the two cases. The indicators such as the degree of urbanization, share of women in labour force and gross regional product are chosen here to measure a particular region's level of development. While these indicators are far from flawless[52], they are expected to show whether one region, that of high Uzbek concentration can be considered as economically developed or backward.

Finally, the cultural legacy is explored. This is done by looking at the extent to which seventy and more years of Soviet rule and nationality policies have managed to create an Uzbek national consciousness or whether other forms of identities are available. I do agree with most of the scholarship on Central Asia (and in fact, similar opinions were voiced by local respondents as well) that identities are contextual, overlapping, and changing. At the same time, I also believe that it is possible for someone to identify a primary form of self-identification, and to choose between a pool of identities. This should not be seen as a mechanistic exercise, but rather to assess the robustness of a particular type of identity – here, ethnic – over others. A discussion of the Soviet legacies does certainly not end here. In fact, the importance of the Soviet experience permeates the whole study. This applies to discussions of the role of agency, where leaders often adopt a language which is rooted in the Soviet experience (socialist internationalism, inter-ethnic friendship, cooperation with the state), as well as of ideas, where the choice of frames used to mobilize (or de-mobilize) the population can only be understood if contextualised in the language of the Soviet nationality policies (i.e. the rejection of a diasporic identity because of the importance that concept of indigenousness had in Soviet times for the way a group could be conceptualised and its implications in terms of status, prestige and resources in the Soviet hierarchy of peoples).

Having delineated the background context, proximate structural factors are examined. These can be distinguished from the former (structural pre-conditions) in two ways. First, they take place in the post-Soviet period and, second, they can vary more swiftly than the structural pre-conditions. The second dimension of the context

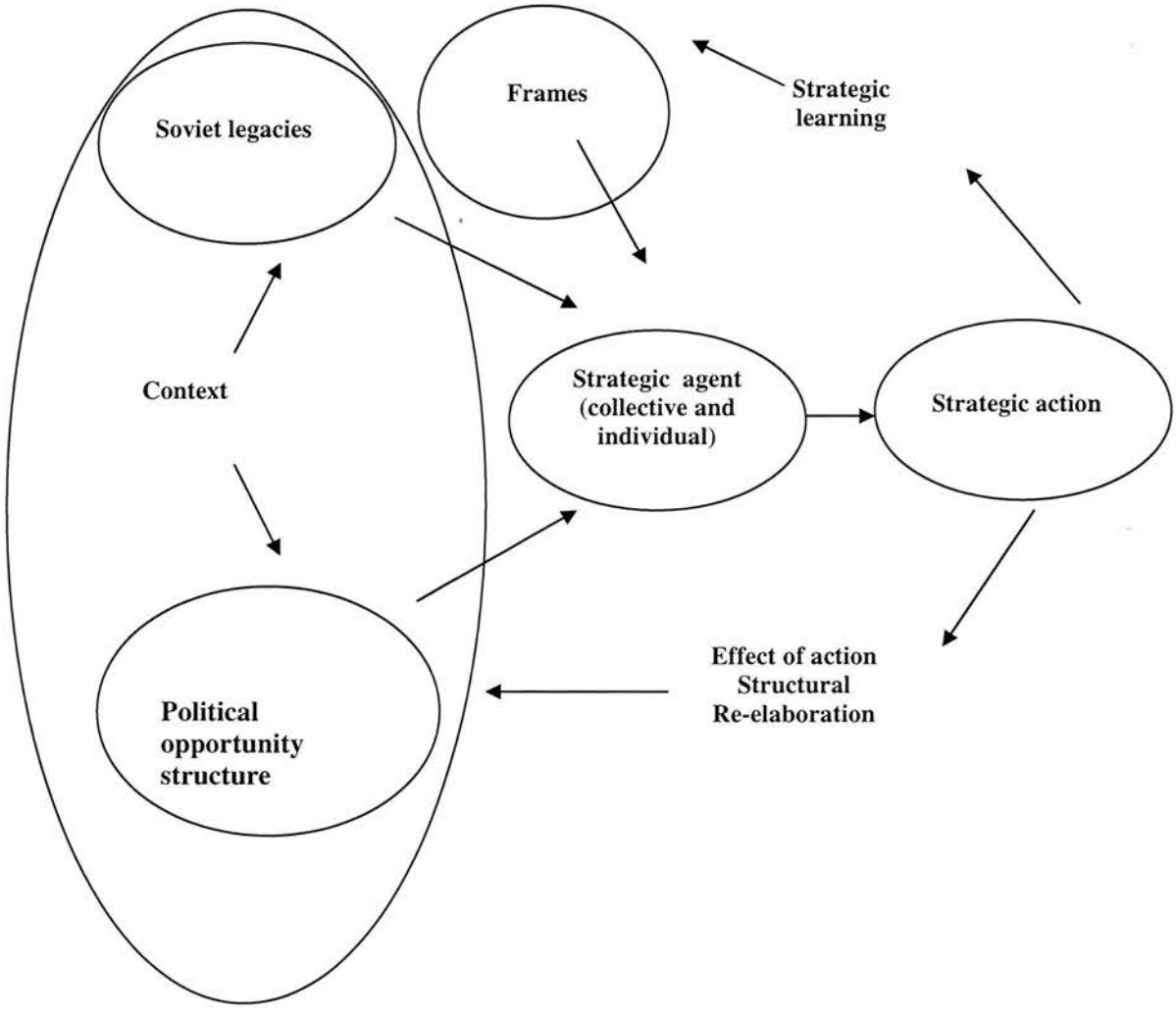
[52]I am aware that controlling for region is not the same as controlling for ethnicity, but the paucity of data on the topic did not allow otherwise. Because Uzbeks are spatially concentrated in some areas, one expects that the level of economic development of a region will give a good sense of the economic conditions of the areas where the Uzbek populations live.

is referred to here as the political opportunity structure. This cluster of factors comprises two separate dimensions: the kin state (Uzbekistan) and the state of residence of the Uzbek community. I discuss both by adopting a similar format, comparing official policies and elite views with perspectives from below. First the state of residence is taken into account. Here a whole range of policies is considered, covering citizenship laws, language, census, media, and political organization. By looking at these, it will be possible to understand the margins of autonomous political action available to Uzbeks in both countries. A key factor that will also be considered is that of the agency of the state leaders (Askar Akaev, who dominated Kyrgyzstani politics from 1990 to 2005, and Rakhmonov, in power since 1994). What matters is to determine how (and if, at all) they made a difference in shaping the political environment in their respective countries. Finally, though by no means less important, are the attitudes and perceptions of Uzbeks themselves. The perceptions of effectiveness of various institutions in dealing with Uzbek issues are discussed, as well as the questions deemed as most important for the Uzbek community. I then discuss Uzbekistan's relations with Uzbek co-ethnics abroad by examining state ideology and official documents in Uzbekistan as well as the perspectives of Uzbekistani Uzbeks. Moving onto the other side of the border I look at the attitudes of Uzbeks in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan towards Uzbekistan.

Frames. Frames, here understood as a particular set of ideas, beliefs, and perceptions that are used to mobilize the wider Uzbek community, are inevitably linked to structure because, as Ukudeeva-Freeman notes (2003), a successful frame is more likely to resonate with the population when it is familiar. Familiarity in this case relates back to the Soviet period, as findings in chapter 6 show. This of course does not prevent new frames from emerging (i.e. more nationalist ones), but that requires an intensive work of frame construction by a particular actor. Here I am interested in identifying what types of perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs are articulated and resonate across the Uzbek population in order to explore identify the trajectory of Uzbek mobilization. The creation of frames emphasising integration and accommodation is expected to lead to a different type of attitude of the Uzbek community compared to a situation where more antagonistic frames are developed, namely secession.

Agency. Finally, political agency is examined. Following Hay (2002), I discuss both individual and collective actors. This means taking into account the identity, behaviour and choices of individual elite actors within the Uzbek community as well as the organizations that act as vehicles for mobilization. First I discuss collective actors: the organizations established to promote Uzbek interests, their agenda and structure. Second, I move to individual actors, most notably the Uzbek elites. Their identity, as well as thei relationship with both state authorities and potential followers, as well as their tactics to pursue those ties, are explored. Their strategy is outlined and discussed. The second part of chapter 7 moves beyond the elites, and drawing on Gorenburg's work on ethnic minority mobilization in the Russian Federation (2003) aims to examine the attitudes and beliefs of the rank and file. The goal there is understand the extent to which elites and grassroots relate to each other. Ordinary Uzbeks will be asked about their views of their leaders, the extent to which they share their agenda and strategies, as well as their perceptions of state policy.

Figure 3. 1. Visualization of the strategic-relational approach to Uzbek mobilization



CHAPTER 4
The Soviet legacies

The scope of this chapter is to explore how the Soviet experience has shaped the environment within which Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani Uzbeks have found themselves following the Soviet demise. It examines what appear to be structural preconditions, or the long-term structural context (as opposed to the short-term one, such as the political opportunity structure, examined in chapter 5) which refer to those resources over which the individual has no control at the moment of action. The chapter is structured thematically and covers political, economic, and cultural legacies.

Section I builds on chapter 2 and looks at the political implications of the Soviet nationality policies in terms of the creation of resources for mobilization. In particular it looks at the presence (or absence) of ethnic institutions set in place to promote Uzbek identity. By doing so, the section provides an introduction to contemporary developments in Uzbek ethnopolitics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Section II engages the literature on economic deprivation and argues that the two cases, marked by constant economic underdevelopment (Southern Kyrgyzstan) and economic decline (Sughd), ask for the qualification of economic theories of ethnic mobilization. The chapter argues that regardless of a region's initial position vis-à-vis the centre in terms of relative wealth or relative deprivation, mobilization is expected to occur when the spiral of change in the region's economic conditions turns downwards. In essence the chapter suggests that economic issues have not played a great role in Uzbek mobilizational dynamics and explanations should be sought elsewhere. It goes without saying that economic development can be measured in different ways. In transitional societies this is likely to generate controversies over the indicators and the methodologies adopted. In this respect I share Kandiyoti's critique of the applicability of standard quantitative forms of measurement of poverty to post-Soviet Central Asia (1999). Additionally the paucity

of data and the question of comparability thereof across countries should be considered as well. On this basis I opted for assessing the level of economic development according to the following indicators: degree of urbanization (given the centrality of urban centres to Soviet mode of development this should constitute a reliable indicator of economic development), percentage of women in the country/area's labour force and variations in gross regional product compared across time and across regions.

Finally, section III shows that despite expectations of a resurgence of ethnic identities following the Soviet collapse, ethnicity has been but one of the main identities adopted by the Uzbek community. However important – as it certainly is – for self-identification, the chapter argues that Uzbeks have accommodated their ethnic identity with other forms of state, supra-state and sub-state identities, without necessarily adopting one in an exclusive way. Additionally strength in group identity (here, ethnic) and internal cohesion (attachment to ethnicity spread evenly across the community) are essential factors for mobilization to occur. A caveat is necessary here. Constructivist theories, which inform my approach to the study of identities, do not regard them as given or fixed, but rather as fluid, multiple and overlapping. What is presented in the following should therefore be seen as a series of portraits rather than photographs mirroring the complexities of Uzbek self-perception. At the same time because identities change this does not mean that the extent to which individuals identify with them cannot be empirically grasped and measured. As a consequence one should not infer from the following discussion a desire to reify processes of identity formation, but rather an attempt to compare the degree of attachment to particular types of loyalties.

4.1. Political legacies

The early 1990s did not seem to bode well for inter-ethnic relations in Central Asia. The 1990 clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern Kyrgyzstani towns of Osh and Uzgen[53], following other riots in Ferghana between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks, and in Dushanbe between the local population and Armenian refugees from the South Caucasus seemed to announce a season of bloody ethnic conflicts in the

[53]For a full account of the clashes see Tishkov (1995).

region. Fortunately enough, this did not materialise, and the root causes of unrest periodically occurring in the Ferghana Valley were primarily social and economic (Tishkov, 1995). Whether or not Uzbek grievances will erupt is a question that has defined the discourse over the role of Uzbek communities on the Kyrgyzstani side of the Ferghana Valley (Khamidov 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; ICG 2001b, 2002a; Lubin and Rubin, 1999; Tabyshalieva et al., 1998).

4.1.1. Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan

The 1990 conflict has defined inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan for the following decade and beyond. Seeking to understand the Osh conflict and its implications cannot transcend exploring the dynamics of Kyrgyzstani politics in the Soviet era. Pauline Jones Luong has convincingly shown how "regional identities, regionally-based actors, preferences, and conceptualizations of power and power relations" characterised Soviet Kyrgyzstani politics (2002 p.2). Regionalism, Jones Luong argues (ibid. p.56) manifested itself in two key ways: the development of regional – as opposed to national – social movements and political organizations, and the power struggle between regional and central elites. In Kyrgyzstan two parallel types of competition took place: inter-regional, between northern and southern factions, and intra-regional, between northern groups (ibid. p.76). Regional divisions were reinforced by Soviet policies of economic specialization (with an industrial north and an agricultural south) and cadre recruitment policies. This led to competition between regional elites for the control of the centre and in return the dependency of the centre on the periphery. In line with the logic of Soviet nationality policy the titular group, Kyrgyz from various clans and regions, "competed for dominance" (ibid. p.81). However, Kyrgyzstan was also home to dozens of ethnic groups some of which like Russians in the north and Uzbeks in the south, were particularly sizeable, and these came to expect shares in political and economic rewards in return for support (ibid., see table 4.1). Uzbeks, Jones Luong observes, traditionally occupied key places in the agriculture and water ministries. (ibid.). If on the one hand Soviet authorities fostered inter-regional political conflict, they also made regional solidarity possible, particularly in the south where Uzbeks and Kyrgyz shared not

only cultural traits, but also political and economic interests, such as limiting the dominance of northern groups.

These commonalities did not prevent the outbreak of riots between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern Kyrgyzstani towns of Osh and Uzgen in June 1990. Towards the end of the 1980s a conjuncture of socio-economic crisis, decreasing living standards, and political destabilization, led to the eruption of inter-group tensions over the competition for resources (land lots), lack of housing and control over power structures (Tishkov, 1995 p.135). Mass riots broke out on 4th June and were "extinguished" on 10th June 1990 only after armed forces intervened and a state of emergency was declared in the republic (ibid.). The possible triggering factors indicated as causes of the riot are multiple, including the KGB's covert role, links between political factions and mafia-like economic groups. Perceptions of losses in both socio-economic status, and in political influences resulting from the political changes (related to the distribution of political positions between regional clans) probably played a bigger role as triggers for conflict (ibid.). One should also note the absence of organized movements implicated in the preparation or unfolding of events although loose and informal organizations were indeed agitating and inflaming spirits (most notably "Osh Aimagy" – Osh Land - among Kyrgyz, and "Adolat" – Justice - among Uzbeks). While the conflict had essentially socio-economic causes, it manifested itself along ethnic lines, and demands started to take ethnic tones, including requests for recognizing Uzbek as official language or even a request for annexation of parts of territory to Uzbekistan (Spector, 2004 p.6).

What is certain is that, regardless of the real or imagined causes, the Osh conflict left long-lasting scars among the local population, as is discussed in chapter 6. The Osh conflict inevitably brought to the attention of political elites the centrality of inter-ethnic stability for the viability of the country. It also provided a window of opportunity for a political outsider and compromise candidate to emerge as president in October 1990: Askar Akaev. For large part of the post-independence period, and certainly in the early years of his presidency, Akaev managed to build a broad coalition, engaged in political and economic liberalization and was attentive to the

demands of ethnic minorities, who felt under threat from nationalist organizations, on which Akaev himself also depended[54].

Table 4.1. Ethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan

	1926 (no.)	1926 (%)	1959 (no.)	1959 (%)	1989 (no.)	1989 (%)	1999 (no.)	1999 (%)
Kyrgyz	668,700	66.8	836,800	40.5	2,229,663	52.4	3128144	64.9
Russians	116,800	11.8	23,600	30.2	916,558	21.5	603198	12.5
Uzbeks	106,300	10.6	218,900	10.6	550,096	12.9	664953	13.8
Ukrainians	64,200	6.4	137,000	6.6	108,027	2.5	50441	1.0
Germans	4,300	0.4	39,900	1.9	101,309	2.4	21472	0.4
Tatars	4,900	0.5	56,300	2.7	70,068	1.6	45439	0.9
Uighurs	8,200	0.8	13,800	0.7	37,318	0.9	46733	1.0
Kazakhs	1,700	0.2	20,100	1.0	36,928	0.9	42657	0.9
Dungans	6,000	0.6	11,100	0.5	36, 779	0.9	51766	1.1
Tajiks	7,000	0.7	15,200	0.7	33,518	0.8	42636	0.9
Other	13,600	1.4	93,400	4.5	137,491	3.2	125499	2.6
TOTAL	**1,001,700**	**100.0**	**2,066,100**	**100.0**	**4,257,755**	**100.0**	**4822938**	**100.0**

Source: Narodnoe khoziaistvo Kirgizskoi SSR (1982), quoted in Huskey (1997 p.247); Naselenie Kirgizskoi Respubliki 1999 (Komitet po Statistikoi 2000); Elebayeva, Abazov and Omuraliev (2000 p.307).

Akaev managed to defuse tensions and maintained a careful balance between factions, ethnic groups and clans. In return for his role as guarantor of ethnic peace he could count on the loyalty of minority groups, Uzbeks among them, which manifested itself in both parliamentary and presidential elections. Though still supportive of the Akaev regime, Uzbeks have grown increasingly discontented at the lack of representation in governing bodies and the lack of response to cultural demands (Spector, 2004 p.12). A turn to authoritarian practices since 1993, Clearly evident from 1994-1995, marked the changing of Akaev from outsider (and reformer) to "insider" (ibid., p.19), interested in the consolidation of power and relying on increasingly narrower power bases. Overall, the most visible legacy is represented by the memory of the 1990 conflict (its salience will be examined in more depth in chapter 6). In addition, one also notes that because Uzbeks already enjoyed titular status in the Uzbek SSR, they were not given territorial autonomy in

[54]This paradox is illustrated by the emphasis given by Kyrgyzstani authorities to both Manas as historical figure and hero of the Kyrgyz people and the inclusive concept of "Kyrgyzstan our common home", which implies a non ethnic substratum in state ideology (Megoran, 2002d).

the Soviet era. This has severely hampered the pool of resources on which Uzbeks could have drawn to mobilize. There is an established consensus in the literature on ethnic mobilization on the critical importance that ethnic institutions played as resource for minority mobilization in the late Soviet and post-Soviet era (Adams, 1999a; Beissinger, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003; Hirsch, 2005; Roeder, 1991; Slezkine, 1994). Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks lacked such institutions which would guarantee acess to a whole range of resources, including the presence of national cadres. While Uzbeks could none the less enjoy cultural rights as individuals, they became politically marginalized by the titular nation. As the section has shown, regional competition has defined Kyrgyz politics in the Soviet era – and has continued to do so after independence. Lacking institutions or clan affiliations, it has increasingly become very difficult for Uzbeks to enter the Kyrgyz(stani) political game.

4.1.2. Uzbeks in Tajikistan

Uzbeks constitute the largest non Tajik group in Tajikistan (ca. 15-25%[55], see table 4.2) and the largest settlement of Uzbeks in post-Soviet Central Asia outside Uzbekistan. Shirin Akiner suggests that the enthonym Uzbek should be seen as an umbrella term, and not as indicative of a cohesive community (2001 p.9). According to Akiner (ibid.) it is possible to identify four clusters of Uzbek presence in Tajikistan. Uzbeks living in the north of the country (Sughd province, formerly Leninabad) constitute a fairly homogenous population who have traditionally integrated with Tajik communities to the point that many among them refuse a clear-cut distinction[56]. In the rest of the country the picture is more fragmented. Uzbeks in the south-west (Khatlon province, formerly Kulyab and Qurghonteppa) are the descendants of the first wave of invasion of Turkic tribes from the mid-sixth century onwards. These are distinct from those living in the centre-west of Tajikistan. Until recently semi-nomadic, the origins of these Uzbeks lie in the second wave of Turkic invasion before the thirteenth century. Finally, Lokays (or Lakays[57]) are located near Hissar and Kulyab. Whether or not they can actually be considered Uzbek is a matter of dispute. In most cases, they are not, whereas between Uzbeks and state institutions

[55]Depending on the census considered (see chapter 5).
[56]As shown in chapter 4.
[57]Both spellings are commonly used in the literature.

there are endless quarrels on whether Lakay should be considered a category in its own right in the census[58]. Despite all this internal heterogeneity – remindful of the regional differences of Uzbekistani Uzbeks, as explored by Adams (1999a) and Schoeberlein (1996) – "[t]he Tajik population now tends to regard all Uzbeks, whatever their origin, as one people", Akiner contends (ibid.), though recent state policy favouring groups previously categorized as Uzbek to opt for Barlos, Lokay or others, seems to suggest otherwise[59].

In order to understand the dynamics of Uzbek mobilization in post-Soviet Tajikistan it is important to emphasise three main processes that have defined modern Tajikistan: the way the country emerged from the national-delimitation process (1924-36), the pattern of centre-regions relations and the implications thereof for elite recruitment and resource allocation, and finally the 1992-1997 civil war that left the country on the brink of institutional and societal collapse.

The national-delimitation process played a defining role in shaping today's Tajikistan. Not only did it define the boundaries which have remained unchanged since 1929 – when the country's status changed from ASSR to SSR. It also constituted the only experience Tajikistan had as a national-territorial state. The creation of Soviet Tajikistan was not void of problems. Quite the contrary: the decision to include strongly Uzbekified areas such as the western Ferghana Valley, but to leave cities like Bukhara and Samarkand within Uzbekistan were highly controversial and ultimately made Tajikistan an "incomplete country", strongly dependent on its stronger western neighbour, and Russia. Soviet Tajikistan was a country with a village as capital – though Dushanbe soon became a cosmopolitan city - comprising regions that were at very best loosely interconnected with each other and with no clear idea of what being Tajik meant.

Second, centre-regional relations were defined not just by inter-regional competition, but by the unofficial regional stratification that assigned Leninabad a hegemonic role. Though one should be careful not to reify regions as if they were

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[58]In fact many Uzbek respondents have lamented the fact that during the recent 2000 census Tajikistani authorities have promoted Lokay self-identification and the sense of distinctiveness of Lokays from Uzbeks. This would have increased the proportion of Lokays and decreased that of Uzbeks proper. Census figures, as in all other Central Asian states, are vehemently contested by minority groups as they are seen as an instrument of state authorities.

[59]On census as tool of state policy see chapter 5.

discrete units, regionalism and competition between regional factions for influence and resources became defining elements in the making of modern Tajikistan. That the Leninabad elite played a pivotal role in Soviet Tajikistan can hardly be disputed. This could be ascribed to economic, socio-cultural and geographic reasons. including the fact that the region was the only industrialized area in an otherwise rural or inhospitable land. Its geographic location, integrated in the Ferghana Valley region and with Uzbekistan, made Tajikistan's economic system viable, though in the end the country depended on Moscow's subsidies. The north was also culturally more exposed to contacts with Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union, compared to the more provincial areas in the south. Sizeable Uzbek settlements in the north made co-operation between Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's elite somewhat easier. There has been a tendency among scholars, especially within Tajikistan, to exaggerate Leninabad's influence, thereby contributing to the exacerbation of regional tensions and ultimately assigning blame for the start of the civil war (Khudonazar, 1995; Gretsky, 1995[60]). By contrast, Akiner questions the dominant view that Leninabadis held exclusive power in Soviet times (2001 p.19). Akiner maintains that while political life was dominated by the north from the 1940s (particularly since 1946, with Bobojon Ghafurov's ascent as party first secretary) until 1992, the other provinces were also represented, with the only exception of the Kulyabis, systematically marginalized in the country's political life and system of resource allocation. Pamiris, Gharmis, Russians, and Uzbeks could be found in positions of influence (ibid.). Even towards the end of the Soviet era when nationalist sentiments became to emerge and occasional clashes sparked (i.e. Isfara with Kyrgyz over water allocation, in Dushanbe against alleged Armenian refugees over housing, and in Ganchi between Uzbeks and Tajiks), the position of minority groups was rarely threatened. Muriel Atkin observes in fact that "the late Soviet regime in Tajikistan made several conciliatory gestures towards the republic's Uzbek minority" (1997 p.299). Bookstores offering Uzbek language publications were opened in the south of the country, a new Uzbek weekly launched – alongside two other newspapers already publishing in Uzbek language and Uzbek broadcasts on the radio. Schools provided Uzbek-language tuition in areas of compact Uzbek settlement (ibid.).

[60]This also emerged from interviews with the historians Kamoluddin Abdullayev and Rahim Masov in Dushanbe, August 2003

This positive environment, alongside Leninabad's traditional close links with Tashkent, explain Uzbek behaviour in the third process that left an indelible scar in Tajikistan's social fabric: the civil war (1992-97) The roots of the civil war are complex and multi-faceted, and a monocausal explanation fails to capture the different dynamics operating at different levels. Several cleavages divided Tajik society and factions organised around them: regional and geographic, of course, but also ideological (between Islamic and democratic factions and more Sovietized ones), urban/rural. Though the war never took ethnic tones, it was also about defining what being Tajik meant. However, a critical reason for the outbreak of hostilities lay in the failure of government and opposition to moderate and accommodate their respective demands. The conflict manifested itself in the form of a challenge from previously excluded factions and Gretsky (1995), in particular, is adamant that Soviet Tajikistan remained for large part of its history deprived of autonomous agency as it acted as Tashkent's appendix through the action of the Leninabadi faction. In their explanations Gretsky (1995) and Khudonazar (1995) ascribe a destabilising role to the Leninabadi faction and by extension to Uzbekistan who intervened to protect their clients that included ethnic Uzbeks. This argument seems unconvincing as there is little evidence to support the thesis that Uzbekistan's foreign policy has been animated by concerns for Uzbek co-ethnics. Additionally the possibility that Uzbeks in the north may push for secession was also advanced (Khujand remained outside of Dushanbe's writ for several months in 1992, but so did the rest of the country), but rapidly dismissed; there was no political will to seek secession nor to be incorporated in Uzbekistan amongst those in the northern province (Human Rights Watch, 1998; Martin, 1997[61]). Rather, Horsman (1999a) and Akbarzadeh (2005) point to the security discourse that has defined Uzbekistan's geopolitical orientation. Concern for Uzbeks abroad may have mattered to some extent, Horsman concedes, but as chapter 5 discusses, Uzbekistan has never set in place an active diaspora policy. Uzbekistan's aims in Tajikistan were directed at protecting their traditional clients in the north. The sudden reversal of the power balance in the country and Russia's overarching presence have de facto sidelined Uzbekistan. The attempts to act by proxy (through the Tajik army renegade colonel

[61]This view was also confirmed by the Khujandi researcher Fatimakhon Ahmedova (August, 2003).

Makhmud Khudoyberdiev) in 1997 and 1998 failed and Uzbekistan's role in Tajikistan has become increasingly peripheral. Uzbeks, Akiner notes, have sided with the "government" forces and in the southern areas have joined the Popular Front, a pro-government militia. Again, the motivation was the will to protect of existing privileges from the perceived threat from the Islamic and democratic opposition. Tajikistan Uzbeks have predominantly supported the incumbent in Tajikistan and Rakhmonov since 1994 for his role in stabilising the country. To be sure, there were Uzbeks among the ranks of the opposition, particularly within the ranks of the exiled Islamic opposition that had found refuge and some degree of support when fleeing Uzbekistan in the early 1990s. Elements of the IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) closely co-operated with factions of the Tajik opposition, though this tactical alliance (anti-government and anti-Uzbekistani) between them waned in the aftermath of the 1997 Peace Accords leading to power sharing between government and opposition. The one faction that was not included in the agreement was the so-called "third force", based in the north. However, the rationale behind the political marginalization of the north seems to lie more within the Soviet patterns of domination than out of any ethnically based policy. Similar to the case of Kyrgyzstan, because of the Uzbek status as a titular nation in the Uzbek SSR, no special autonomy was recognised to the Uzbek population in the country. Again, this meant that although entitled to cultural rights as individuals, Uzbeks were not "eligible" for claims to a national territory and hence autonomy.

Table 4.2. Ethnic composition of Tajikistan

Group	**1979 (%)**	**1979**	**1989 (%)**	**1989**	**2000 (%)**	**2000**
Tajiks	58.8	2237048	62.3	3172420	79.9	4898382
Uzbeks	*23.0*	*873199*	*23.5*	*1197841*	*15.3*	*936703*
Russians	10.4	395089	7.6	388481	1.1	68171
Kyrgyz	1.3	48376	1.3	63832	1.1	65515
Lakay	-	-	-	-	0.8	51001
Congrats	-	-	-	-	0.3	15102
Catagans	-	-	-	-	0.1	4888
Yuz	-	-	-	-	0.0	1053
Barlos	-	-	-	-	0.1	3743
Semiz	-	-	-	-	0.0	1
Kesamir	-	-	-	-	0.0	13
Others	6.5	252,508	5.3	270,029	0.1	148436
Total	*100.0*	*3806220*	*100.0*	*5092603*	*100.0*	*6127493*

Source: Naselenie Respubliki Tadzhikistan 2000 (2002).

4.2. Economic legacies

Scholarship on ethnic mobilization has divided between those arguing that it is economic deprivation that facilitates mobilization (Emizet and Hesli, 1995; Gurr, 1994 and 2000; Horowitz, 1985) and those maintaining that wealthier regions are more politically active (Gourevitch, 1979; Hale, 2000). Because of the paucity of data available the scope of the section is limited to exploring the extent to which a clear trend can be detected in regions where Uzbeks are compactly present (hence Sughd, Osh, and Jalalabat). What interests here is not just the attempt to examine the region's economic performance in isolation, but also to place it in perspective with other regions in the country. In this respect the two areas are specular. Sughd was traditionally the wealthier region alongside the capital Dushanbe in Tajikistan, whereas the economic divide between an industrialised northern (especially Chuy and Bishkek) and a rural southern Kyrgyzstan (particularly Osh) has traditionally been stark.

Table 4.3. Poverty and inequality in the late Soviet era

	Per cap GNP (1990)	Gini coefficient[62]	Poverty (% of population) (1989)
USSR	2870	0.289	11.1
Kazakhstan	2600	0.289	15.5
Kyrgyzstan	1570	0.287	32.9
Tajikistan	1130	0.308	51.2
Turkmenistan	1690	0.307	35.0
Uzbekistan	1340	0.304	43.6
Armenia	2380	0.259	14.3
Azerbaijan	1640	0.328	33.6
Georgia	2120	0.292	14.3
Belarus	3110	0.238	3.3
Moldova	2390	0.258	11.8
Russia	3430	0.278	5.0
Ukraine	2500	0.235	6.0
Estonia	4170	0.299	1.9
Latvia	3590	0.274	2.4
Lithuania	3110	0.278	2.3

Source: Pomfret (1999 p.9).

[62]The Gini coefficient (value between 0 and 1) is used to measure inequality.

Table 4.4a Kyrgyzstan – Degree of urbanization (1999)

	KR	Bishkek	Chuy	Talas	Ysyk-Kul	Naryn	Osh	Jalalabat	Batken
Territory (thou. km2)	199.9	127	20.2	11.4	43.1	45.2	29.2	33.7	17.0
% urban	34.8	99.5	22.0	16.8	30.4	18.3	23.2	23.1	19.2

Source: Kratkie Itogi pervoi perepisi naseleniia Kirgizskoi Respubliki (1999).

Table 4.4b Tajikistan – Degree of urbanization (2000)

	Country average	Sughd	Dushanbe	DRS	Khatlon	GBAO
Territory (thou. km2)	143.1	25.4	0.1	28.6	24.8	64.22
% urban	26.6%	26.6%	100%	12.4%	17.3%	13.4%

Source: Naselenie Respubliki Tadzhikistan 2000 (2002).

Table 4.5a Women in labour force (Kyrgyzstan)

	Country average	Bishkek	Chuy	Ysyk-kul	Naryn	Talas	Osh	Jalalabat	Batken
% (1998)	46[63]	46.7	45.2	44.1	43.5	44.5	46.5	45.9	46.9
% (1996)	51[64]	47.6	45.5	44.1	45.2	49.0	45.8	48.4	-

Source: Kyrgyzstan: National Human Development Report (2000).

Table 4.5b Women in labour force (Tajikistan)

	Country average	Dushanbe	Sughd	Khatlon	GBAO	DRS
%	24.8	45.0	41.0	28.0	50.0	32.2

Source: Human Development Report Tajikistan (1995).

Table 4.6. Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Poverty Index[65] (Kyrgyzstan)

	Country average	Bishkek	Batken	Jalalabat	Ysyk-kul	Naryn	Osh	Talas	Chuy
HDI	0.723	0.767	0.677	0.707	0.752	0.696	0.682	0.715	0.720
HPI-1	8.7	7.6	10.5	8.7	6.8	8.5	11.5	4.9	9.6

Source: Kyrgyzstan National Human Development Report (2001).

[63]Year 1999.
[64]Year 1999.
[65]The HDI is a composite indicator encompassing life expectancy, level of education, and welfare of the population. The HPI-1 instead gives a sense of poverty levels by taking into account indicators that include (and go beyond) income, also literacy among the adult population and an indicator of material deprivation (HDR Kyrgyzstan, 2001 p. 18-23; HDR, 2002).

As the tables above show in both countries the level of urbanization is extremely low: 34.8% in Kyrgyzstan and 26.6% in Tajikistan, the lowest in the region (compared to 37% in Uzbekistan, 45% in Turkmenistan, 56% in Kazakhstan)[66]. In Kyrgyzstan urbanization in the southern provinces is lower than the national average (23% in Osh and Jalalabat, 19% in Batken), although it is reasonable to say that but for the obvious exception of the city of Bishkek, the whole country is rural. The same can be said of Tajikistan, where the level of urbanization is even lower than in Kyrgyzstan (26.6% compared to 34.8%). However, the degree of urbanization in the Sughd region perfectly mirrors the national average for the republic and shows higher levels of urbanization compared to other provinces. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) in the Pamir is scarcely inhabited, whereas the south-western province of Khatlon and the central districts (under republican subordination) are distinctively more rural than the northern province. This is hardly a surprise as the Sughd region has traditionally been home to the large majority of industries and urban centers of the republic. Sughd is home to eight towns with a population higher than 10,000 (Khujand being the largest with 149,000 inhabitants, but also Istarafshan, Isfara, Kayrakum, Kanibadam, Penjikent, Tabowar and Chkalovsk). Some districts are also home to a large rural population (Bobojon Ghaffurov, Ganchi, Asht, Isfara, Kanibadam, and Penjikent).

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were among the poorest republics of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan's per capita GNP was, at 1,130 USD, the lowest of the fifteen Union Republics. Kyrgyzstan's at 1,570 USD did not fare much better. Between one third and one half of the population were considered poor. The situation did not improve after the collapse of the Soviet order, and generally got worse. It has been estimated that in Tajikistan 83% of the population lies below the threshold of poverty[67], with 17% completely destitute. Olimov and Olimova (1996) emphasise the distorting effect that regional policies in the Soviet period had on national unity. The case of Leninabad is, according to Olimov, particularly illustrative of the complexity of the region. Leninabad had two "special relationships": one as part of the Tajikistan

[66]73% in Russia, without mentioning data from Western European countries (67% in Italy and 89.5% in the United Kingdom)

[67]Poverty is not evenly distributed in the country. In fact, half of the population categorised as poor (45.7%) lives in Khatlon (province), one fourth (26.1%) in Sughd, and remainder in other areas (19.2% DRS, 2.1% in Dushanbe, and 6.9% in GBAO) (HDR Tajikistan, 1996).

SSR (of which it was the economic engine), and the other as part of the Ferghana valley, of which Leninabad/Khujand constitutes the southern part and with which it is economically complementary. Uzbekistan's border policies were in a way beneficial to the state-building efforts of the national governments in Bishkek and Dushanbe, as they forced the peripheral regions to focus on their relations (political, economic, and cultural) with the centre. Being cut off from economic integration at cross-border regional level, Leninabad/Khujand had no option but to turn to Dushanbe. As said, this was beneficial to republican governments: the total tax revenues from Sughd steadily increased in the 1990s. From 47.3% in 1996, for example, the contribution increased to 61.2% in 1999. One third of the industrial enterprises in the country remained based in the north. Relations between centre and periphery were not mutually beneficial, though. In fact, state investment in the region remained remarkably low during the 1990s (9.3% in 1995, 6% in 1996), reflecting a shift in priorities by the government in Dushanbe (Ilolov and Khudoiyev, 2001 p.628). To summarise, Sughd experienced a radical shift in economic policies during the transitional period. It found itself increasingly marginalized. Still, the overall situation remains far better than other provinces (Dushanbe excluded).

Although it was spared from the fighting, it is impossible to ignore the impact of the civil war on Leninabad/Sughd. In fact Sughd/Leninabad was hit the hardest first by the crisis and later by the conflict. Regional markets were cut off and government contracts were interrupted (Boymatov, 2004 p.51). At the same time economic links with neighbouring Uzbekistan (especially) and Kyrgyzstan were severed, and this also negatively affected the trade balance of the region (ibid., p.60). The region used to be home to two thirds of Tajikistan's industrial enterprises and before the war Leninabad alone contributed to the republic's economy 70% of the republican budget[68]. In 1991 the region produced 37.5% of the country's GDP, though this dropped to 16.3% in 1996 and only recovered towards pre-war levels in 2001 (21.2%) and 2002 (36.3) (Boymatov, 2004 p.48). In a very detailed review of economic centre-regions relations in Tajikistan Alijon Boymatov captures the impact of transition on the Sughd province (2004). Sughd's decline in Gross Regional Product since independence reflected the country's general economic collapse. In

[68]Akiner (2001).

1996 Sughd's GRP represented just a mere 14.1% of the 1991 level. The situation started to improve as soon as the civil war ended in 1997. Production grew at 1.7% nationwide, but at 5.8% in the region, with the northern province reporting a 5.8% growth in 1998 (5.3% nationwide), and even better in following years, 17.6% in 2000 (8.5% nationwide), 86.5% in 2001 (10.8% nationwide), and 11.6% in 2002 (10.6% nationwide)[69].

Contrary to Tajikistan where Sughd experienced a dramatic decline in economic production areas of Uzbek settlement in Kyrgyzstan were and still are lagging behind compared to the rest of the country. Large areas of the south are rural and remote (Batken, but also Osh) and only Jalalabat – where industries are located in the southern areas of the country – has shown signs of recovery. On the basis of both the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Human Poverty Index for developing countries (HPI-1), Osh has regularly ranked bottom on all levels since independence. In a study of the economic impact of transition on the different regions of Kyrgyzstan Pomfret and Anderson have emphasised the strong correlation between economic development and geography (2000). Northern regions have fared better compared to those in the south. Helpfully in their study they also controlled for ethnicity. No significant correlation between ethnicity and economic situation has been detected (ibid.). Lack of growth and low consumption affect Osh, Jalalabat, and Batken in a uniform way. Uzbeks are no poorer – or less poor, for that matter – than other ethnic groups residing in the south (e.g. Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs) and this is noted by Uzbeks themselves when interrogated about the nature of their grievances (political, cultural, economic, in chapter 5).

To summarise, Sughd enjoyed a relatively prosperous economic situation under Soviet times due to its integration with the Ferghana Valley economic and transport system, both of which were interrupted in the course of the 1990s. Additionally, isolation resulting from the war contributed to the general decline in the region. However, since the late 1990s signs of recovery have been evident. This suggests the presence of low economic incentives for Sughd to press for a confrontational attitude towards the state. The case of southern Kyrgyzstan is different because the area has traditionally trailed the north in terms of

[69]All data from Boymatov (2004 p.48).

industrialization and urbanization levels. While some areas (Jalalabat and Batken) have shown signs of mild improvement, Osh has shown constant levels of underdevelopment (as shown by HDI and HPI-1). Though this certainly does not bode well for economic centre-regions relations in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks are reported to have been only marginally affected by the decline and therefore do not consider economic grievances to be at the top of their agenda.

4.3. Cultural legacies: Uzbekness and beyond

Studies on Uzbek identity formation have traditionally focused on Uzbekistani Uzbeks (Adams, 199a and 1999b; Djumaev, 2001; Markowitz, 1998; Schoeberlein, 1994 and 1996), and on how Uzbekistani institutions have promoted Uzbek identity. Little has been said of how Uzbeks abroad have negotiated their being Uzbek while not benefiting from similar institutional resources. If anything, independence has accentuated their sense of otherness from the majority group. Assessing whether this is actually the case and understanding what forms of identity Uzbeks in those countries show strong attachment to constitute the scope of this section. In order to do so I rely on survey data and individual interviews, used as follow-ups to the former. Surveys are expected to produce more robust findings (giving a sense of how many Uzbeks feel in a particular way), whereas interviews are likely to offer a more nuanced understanding of the various forms of identification, often qualifying data emerging from the survey. Firstly I discuss the findings related to national identification. In the following sub-sections I compare it with attachment to state identity and alternative loyalties, namely religious, regional and locality (city, village).

Because the purpose of this section was to establish the degree of attachment to various forms of identification in order to establish which among those, if any, were accorded primacy, a small scale survey was deemed a particularly suitable strategy. The survey, conducted through the use of a questionnaire[70], comprised 136 respondents in Kyrgyzstan and 137 in Tajikistan. Because the sample is both too small in size and sampling techniques were non-random no claim to statistical representativeness is made here. However every effort was made to gather a sense of

[70]For a sample of the questionnaire see the methodological appendix (chapter 9).

various social and geographical groups, so that it is possible to draw an impression of broader trends. Survey data were then coded into and analysed through SPSS 11.5.

What mattered was not so much understanding how Uzbeks perceived their identity, but to put attachment to different loyalties in perspective. There is a consensus among scholars of nationalism studies and social movements alike that for a group to act collectively the presence of some form of collective identification is necessary. This creates a sort of social capital, a resource that political entrepreneurs can use to mobilize the community. This does not mean that a quantitative methodology provides an exhaustive tool for investigating all identity matters. I found individual interviews extremely valuble tools to understand not so much which form of identity Uzbeks felt closest to (this had already been done by means of the survey), but rather to understand an equally crucial aspect of the process of post-Soviet identity transformation among co-ethnics abroad, namely that identities are multiple and overlapping, and Uzbeks have no problems in accommodating them. A very common remark illustrating this point was made to me during my stay in Uzbekistan in the winter of 2002, but perfectly applies to Uzbeks abroad as well:

> "It [what identity prevails] all depends on context. I may be or say I am an Uzbek to you because you are a foreigner, but I may not think of myself as 'Uzbek' if I am talking to my family or friends, or even with someone from another region or city. I am from Tashkent and if I meet someone from Ferghana, I say I am from Tashkent, not I am an Uzbek. Or I can say I am from this or that part of Tashkent when speaking to someone from Tashkent".

4.3.1. Attachment to Uzbek identity

The first question respondents were asked was to indicate their ethnicity. "Uzbek" was by far the most common answer (Kyrgyzstan: Uzbek 94.7%; Tajikistan: Uzbek 97.1%), alternative responses were also given: in Kyrgyzstan five per cent of respondents identified themselves as either Kyrgyz (1.5%), Tajik (3%), or other (0.8%). In Tajikistan identification among Uzbeks with other national groups was also evident (Russian 1.5%, Kyrgyz 0.7%, other 0.7%). When asked how often they identified as Kyrgyz, Uzbeks answered predominantly "never" (78.6%) or "rarely" (14.3%). In Tajikistan a marginal minority of respondents indicated that they "always" identify themselves as "Tajik" (5.1%), 15.2% "sometimes", about the same

percentage answered "rarely" (15.2%), and 64.6% "never" identify themselves as such.

Table 4.7. How important is nationality to you (%)?

	Tajikistan	Khujand	Sughd	Dushanbe	**Kyrgyzstan**	North	Osh city	Osh province[71]	Jalalabat	Batken prov.
Very important	**31.1**	52.6	22.6	22.9	**34.3**	33.3	36.1	50	27.3	30.2
Important	**42.2**	34.2	45.2	45.7	**42.5**	33.3	37.7	40	45.5	51.2
Indifferent	**20.7**	13.2	24.2	22.9	**18.7**	11.1	19.7	10	27.3	18.6
Not very important	**5.2**	0	8.1	5.7	**3.7**	22.2	4.9	0	0	0
Not important at all	**0.7**	0	0	2.9	**0.7**	0	1.6	0	0	0
Total	100.0[72]	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As table 4.7 shows, being Uzbek and defining oneself as such appear to be of primary significance to most respondents. Country aggregate data show that three in four Uzbeks consider their nationality as either important or very important.

Table 4.8 How often do you identify yourself as Uzbek?

	Tajikistan	Khujand	Sughd	Dushanbe	**Kyrgyzstan**	North	Osh city	Osh province	Jalalabat	Batken prov.
Always	73.6	91.7	68.5	62.9	75.8	50.0	69.2	90.0	55.6	88.4
Sometimes	19.2	5.6	20.4	31.4	12.5	16.7	15.4	10.0	22.2	7.0
Rarely	5.6	2.8	7.4	5.7	6.7	0	11.5	0	11.1	2.3
Hardly ever	1.6	0	3.7	0	5.0	33.3	3.8	0	11.1	2/3
Not important at all	0.7	0	0	2.9	0.7	0	1.6	0	0	0

Younger generations in Dushanbe and Khujand appear to consider nationality more important than older generations. In Kyrgyzstan older generations in Batken seem by contrast to consider nationality more important. Elite members in Osh region, and female respondents in Bishkek and Jalalabat in Kyrgyzstan indicated nationality as either important or very important.

[71]By province I mean here the areas of the Osh province excluding the provincial capital.
[72]The sum would be 99.9% but this is due to the fact that only decimals are reported in the table.

4.3.2. Frequency of identification along ethnic lines

Frequency of identification along ethnic lines (table 4.8), despite large variations across the countries in question, is high: three in four respondents identify themselves on a regular basis (always/sometimes) as Uzbeks. Being Uzbek is considered very important and people tend to identify themselves by their ethnicity on a regular basis. Location is an important intervening variable when it comes to establishing the variations in the strength of national sentiments. This is particularly salient in Khujand as well as in rural southern Kyrgyzstani areas (Batken and Osh). In line with the responses to the previous question, Uzbeks residing in urban settings are less likely to identify themselves along national lines, suggesting that urbanization contributes to a weakening of national forms of affiliation. Data seem to confirm that Uzbeks in both countries owe strong allegiance to their ethnicity. About three in four respondents considered nationality as important/very important, and again three in four identify themselves along national lines on a regular basis. However, strong variations exist with regard to both issues (strength and frequency) across gender, region, and social status, but no significant association could be found. Ethnic identification is strong among Uzbeks in both countries, but unevenly distributed across regions.

4.3.3. Regions and *locale*

Scholars often observe that in Central Asia the local populations maintain "situationally contingent, contradictory, and complexly articulating conceptions of their simultaneous membership in multiple groups" (Schoeberlein, 1994). Despite official efforts to create and institutionalise nationality, these identities have never been perceived as exclusive (ibid.). Quite the contrary, "[m]any other overlapping conceptions of descent, region, religion, and other cultural groups continue to structure the lives of Central Asians" (ibid.). My experience in the region supports Schoeberlein's view. I begin an overview of the degree of attachment to other (non national) forms of identification by looking at regional identities, a form of loyalty that scholars have recently indicated as particularly salient in both cultural and political terms (Collins, 2003; Jones Luong, 2002 and 2004). I look here at two

different meanings of region: transborder and cultural (Ferghana) and administrative (oblast').

Ferghana valley identity

A short premise is necessary here. When asking respondents about their identification with the Ferghana Valley I used the term *Farg'onalik* (meaning someone from Ferghana). One should note however that this can be extremely ambiguous. It entails two distinct forms of identification. It refers both to the city of Ferghana (Farg'ona) in Uzbekistan, indicating a city-level loyalty. It also refers to the whole Ferghana valley (*Ferganskaya dolina* in Russian, *Farg'ona vodiy* in Uzbek). I strove to make the reference to this latter interpretation unmistakable: whenever I was conducting surveys myself I explained this in an unequivocal way. In cases when part of the survey was not administered by myself I instructed those administering the questionnaire so that there would be no ambiguities as to what the understanding of Ferghana was.

A Ferghana identity does not appear to be appropriated by local Uzbeks, for whom other loyalties are more relevant. Data show that two to three respondents out of ten in Kyrgyzstan (table 4.9a) associate themselves with the Ferghana Valley (about 20% from the city of Osh, nearly 30% in Jalalabat, and almost 30% in the Batken region). Surprisingly no-one identifies himself/herself with the Ferghana valley in the rural (border) areas of the Osh province. The idea of a Ferghana valley identity is perceived even less in Tajikistan (table 4.9b), where only a marginal number of respondents in Khujand identify themselves as such. Though one should recall that results should be taken as more indicative of trends, they do seem to question a previously accepted finding: the existence of a sense of common belonging to the Ferghana Valley. In Kyrgyzstan data confirm that Ferghana-based loyalties are not as widespread as expected. Some degree of attachment to it is traceable in rural border areas of the Batken region in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan this is even more marginal, barely present in border areas of the Sughd region, though more significant among Uzbeks who migrated to Dushanbe from the northern province. Why is a Ferghana identity so marginal? While one could possibly assume that the idea of a cross-border unity may be a myth, the lack of any meaningful

border until very recently and the degree of integration of the region under pre- and Soviet times, seems instead to suggest that fifteen years of post-Soviet nationalizing policies and the tough visa regime from Tashkent may be generating the effect of forcing the inhabitants of the valley to look towards the respective state capitals rather than towards the other side of the border.

As said, this is an unexpected finding. Reports from the region have insisted on the constructed character of nationality as a form of collective identification as opposed to other, more rooted loyalties (though by no means given either), among them regionalism (Schoeberlein, 1994; Jones Luong, 2002; Collins, 2003). With regard to Uzbekistan Boris-Mathieu Petric (2002 p.121) notes how regional-administrative (i.e. Kashkadaryo, Syrdaryo) or geographical areas (i.e. Ferghana Valley) are often evoked when locals are asked about their identity/-ies. According to Petric, this applies to the Ferghana Valley as well. Farg'onalik, he contends, remains a major expression of regional identity in Uzbekistan (ibid.). This is confirmed by Lawrence Markowitz in his work on the effects of nationality policies on social cohesion Uzbekistan (1998), where he explores identity formation among Ferghana valley Uzbeks and notes how they perceive themselves as distinct from their brethren in other parts of the country (ibid., p.2-5). Most importantly, Markowitz along with other authors, argues that for centuries Uzbeks referred to themselves not as Uzbeks, but "according to their locality or the common reference of Islam" (ibid., p.23).

Table 4.9a: How often do you identify yourself as a *Farg'onalik*? (Kyrgyzstan)

	North	Osh city	Osh region	Jalalabat	Batken region	Kyrgyzstan
Always	0	7.1	0	28.6	10.1	10.1
Sometimes	0	14.3	0	0	17.4	17.4
Rarely	0	7.1	28.6	14.3	17.4	17.4
Hardly ever	100	7.1	71.4	57.1	55.1	55.1

Table 4.9b. How often do you identify yourself as a *Ferghanalik*? (Tajikistan)

	Khujand	Sughd	Dushanbe	Tajikistan
Always	7.1	5.6	5.7	6.1
Sometimes	7.1	0	2.9	3.0
Rarely	3.6	8.3	0	4.0
Hardly ever	86.1	86.1	91.4	86.9

Intra-republican regional identities

Having established that a cross-border regional identity is not widespread, I then turned to regional-type identities along administrative and geographic lines. A north/south rift has been noted as one of the main cleavages in both Tajikistan (Akiner, 2001; Roy, 1997; Rubin, 1998) and Kyrgyzstan (Anderson, 1997, 1999; Dukenbaev and Hansen, 2000; Jones Luong, 2002).

Table 4.10a. How often do you identify yourself as a southerner/northerner?

	North	Osh city	Osh region	Jalalabat	Batken region	Kyrgyzstan
Always	n.a.	22.6	0	33.3	16.7	18.8
Sometimes	n.a.	25.8	33.3	33.3	11.1	21.2
Rarely	n.a.	16.1	55.6	11.1	16.7	20.0
Hardly ever	n.a.	35.5	11.1	22.2	55.6	40.0

Table 4.10b. How often do you identify yourself as a Leninabadi/northerner?

	Khujand	Sughd	Dushanbe	Tajikistan
Always	60.0	43.9	5.7	35.8
Sometimes	20.0	14.6	8.6	14.2
Rarely	10.0	14.6	0	8.5
Hardly ever	10.0	26.8	85.7	41.5

Tables 4.10a and 4.10b show that intra-republican cleavages are considerable. A significant percentage of Uzbeks in Jalalabat (ca. 66%), Osh city (ca. 48%) and province (ca. 33%) identify themselves regularly as southerners, though this does not appear to be the case of Batken, a more geographically and politically isolated province, detached from the rest of the country from three large enclaves. In Tajikistan a northern identity, broadly defined as Leninabadi (the former denomination of the Sughd province) or less frequently referred to as Sughdi, is also present. Around 80% of respondents in the city of Khujand and about 55% per cent of those living in other areas of the province showed that this form of regional loyalty is present. The finding appears of considerable relevance because it shows that a potential for cross-ethnic regional identity exists. The implications of a politicization of regional identity are potentially subversive of the balance of power between regions. A coalition between southerners in Kyrgyzstan has not

materialized, and quite on the contrary southern Kyrgyz have resented the support that Uzbeks have thus far lent to the northern-based ruling elites[73].

By contrast the situation is remarkably different in Tajikistan, where the boundaries between Uzbeks and Tajiks in the north are not so clear-cut and a cross-ethnic coalition of interests had traditionally dominated Tajikistan's political life until 1992. Thereafter, all groups in the north have tended to coalesce around candidates who represented northern as opposed to ethnic interests (i.e. Abdullajonov obtained 95% of votes in Khujand in the 1994 presidential elections, a result he would have never achieved without votes from non Tajiks). The main difference between the two cases lies in the fact that despite sharing a regional identity, Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan have not sided with their fellow Kyrgyz southerners, among which a southern identity is also as strong, whereas northerners in Tajikistan have maintained a form of solidarity, with little practical results, however, given that the northern elites are essentially shut out of the political process (ICG, 2003).

Local identities

Finally, I examined local identities, at city or village level. As table 4.11 below shows, identity at local level is not widespread in Tajikistan, except for the case of Khujand, where 28% of respondents identified themselves with their city on a regular basis (always/sometimes). The situation in Kyrgyzstan is quite different as town- (or village-)dwellers tend to identify with it, with Osh showing the largest value at 78%. It is interesting to note that the values of Khujand appear to be - in many respects - more in line with those from Kyrgyzstan, and from Osh in particular, showing the urban dwellers tend to identify themselves with their locality in a stronger way that those from rural areas. The reasons behind strong attachment to the city can partly be explained by the fact that the two cities are the main administrative centers of their respective provinces and therefore emerge as key political, cultural, and economic "hubs" of the region. Living in Osh and Khujand is often a matter of prestige as well, as they emerge as localities of opportunity to younger generations and as alternatives to unemployment and under-employment in the countryside.

[73]The strategic support from the Uzbeks to the Akaev administration will be elaborated in chapters 5 to 7.

Table 4.11 How often do you identify with your city/village of origin?

	Tajikistan	Khujand	Sughd	Dushanbe	Kyrgyzstan	North	Osh city	Jalalabat
Always	**12.4**	28.1	10.5	0	**66.7**	20.0	78.6	28.6
Sometimes	**7.1**	43.8	10.5	0	**9.3**	20.0	9.5	0
Rarely	**6.7**	18.8	2.6	0	**11.1**	0	9.5	28.6
Hardly ever	**63.8**	9.4	76.3	100.0	**13.0**	60.0	2.4	42.9

4.3.4. Primary form of identification

After exploring the degree of attachment to various forms of identity separately, I asked respondents to opt for one only. I am aware that identities are contextual, and indeed respondents often pointed this out, mentioning that whether they identified themselves as Uzbeks, southerners, city-dwellers or else depended on their interlocutor. Nevertheless I believe it is possible to identify an identity one owes particular allegiance to and this is what this question aimed to highlight.

The striking result is that more Uzbeks tend to identify primarily with the state of residence rather than with the nation of belonging. However, data (tables 4.12a and 4.12b) also show large discrepancies between the two countries. While almost all Tajikistani Uzbeks indicate feeling closest to either state or nation (86% overall), in the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks only 53.5% of respondents identify themselves with either state or nation. In Tajikistan half of respondents in Dushanbe and the Sughd province feel closer to the state, whereas respondents in Khujand tended to privilege nationality as a primary source of identification. In Kyrgyzstan city-level identification obtained far from negligible results in the southern provinces (Osh city and region, and Batken region), whereas respondents in Bishkek (and to a minor extent in the city of Osh) tend to prioritise the state. Central Asia was a popular choice in Jalalabat, a unique case in the survey.

The data suggest that considering one community as a cohesive whole is misleading. Poppe and Hagendoorn (2001), Kolstø (1999) and Gorenburg (2002) have all emphasized the importance of investigating the plurality of perceptions within the community and not just across communities in different cases/countries. In the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks identification with the state is stronger in the south, in contrast with the rate of the response in Bishkek (14.3%). Identification

with the nation is stronger in the cities of Osh and Bishkek (one in four). Overall, though it is noteworthy to point at the fact that half of the respondents chose not to emphasize the attachment to nation or state, but opt for either localized forms of identification such as city/village of origin, or larger than national ones, i.e. Central Asia (in Bishkek, Osh and Jalalabat) or the Ferghana Valley (especially in Batken and Jalalabat). Identification with the Ferghana Valley remained at marginal levels.

Table 4.12a Main focus of loyalty

	Kyrgyzstan	North	Osh city	Osh region	Jalalabat	Batken region
Uzbek nationality	17.6	28.6	24.6	0	9.1	11.6
My City/village	18.3	42.9	13.1	22.2	9.1	23.3
State where I live	35.9	14.3	36.1	55.6	45.5	32.6
Region	3.8	0	6.6	0	0	2.3
Central Asia	9.9	14.3	14.8	0	27.3	0
Other	6.9	0	4.9	22.2	9.1	7
Ferghana Valley	7.6	0	0	0	0	23.3

Table 4.12b. Main focus of loyalty

	Tajikistan	Khujand city	Sughd region	Dushanbe
Uzbek nationality	34.4	59.5	19.6	31.4
My City/village	6.3	0	10.7	5.7
State where I live	51.6	27.0	66.1	54.3
Region	3.9	8.1	3.6	0
Ferghana Valley	3.1	2.7	0	8.6
Other	0.8	2.7	0	0

I also tried to establish whether given a binary choice between state and ethnic identities, respondents opted for one or the other in a decisive manner. Tables 4.13a and 4.13b show a very significant finding: nearly two in three respondents consider ethno-national and state identities equally important, with roughly the same percentage considering only either of the two as important. This is in line with data

from earlier studies conducted in the region (Ifes, 1996b and 2002; Abazov et al., 1999; Bozrikova, 2003 and 2004), which also noted how civic identities are taking root among minority groups. A related finding concerns the extent to which these distinct identity foci are not considered as mutually incompatible, but co-existing without particular problems.

Table 4.13a. Degree of attachment to nation and state (Kyrgyzstan)

	%
Only Uzbek	13.6
More Uzbek than Kyrgyzstani	2.5
Equally Uzbek and Kyrgyzstani	63.0
More Kyrgyzstani than Uzbek	13.6
Neither	3.7
Other	3.7

Table 4.13b. Degree of attachment to nation and state (Tajikistan)

	%
Only Uzbek	15.4
More Uzbek than Tajikistani	8.1
Equally Uzbek and Tajikistani	60.3
More Tajikistani than Uzbek	14.7
Neither	0.7
Other	0.7

4.3.5. What is homeland to you?

I conclude this discussion of what Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan consider as their homeland (table 4.14). In both cases this turned out to be the state of residence, though significant variations exist between and within the two cases. In Kyrgyzstan a bare majority of respondents consider it their homeland[74], whereas four Tajikistani Uzbeks (76.9%) attach their primary identity to the state. Only a marginal percentage of respondents seemed to consider Uzbekistan as their homeland (more so in Tajikistan than in Kyrgyzstan). As previous data also suggest, city-level identities are particularly strong. 36% of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan considered their city or village as their homeland, while the percentage was significantly lower in Tajikistan (12.7%). Interestingly a large majority of female respondents in both countries considered Uzbekistan as their homeland, whereas male respondents looked at their state of residence.

[74]I used different terms to refer to homeland (from rodina to otechestvo) with no variation in the type of responses.

Table 4.14 What is homeland to you?

Kyrgyzstan	%	**Tajikistan**	%
Kyrgyzstan	50%	Tajikistan	76.8
Uzbekistan	3.7%	Uzbekistan	7.5
Region	36%	Region	12.8
City/village	4.4%	City/village	1.5
Other	5.9%	Other	1.4

4.3.6. Summary

The general finding emerging from the previous discussion points to the very variegated picture of Uzbeks living in those two countries. Identity perceptions among Uzbeks are extremely fluid, with frequent overlapping between loyalties at different levels. Context plays a fundamental role in explaining variations in the answers: regional differences between the two countries are remarkable, but so are within-country discrepancies as well.

Secondly, ethnic allegiance emerges as uniformly strong. About three in four respondents in both countries identify strongly with their nation and consider their ethnic identity (though in the survey the term used was nationality) as either important or very important. Ethnic loyalties are particularly strong in rural areas of southern Kyrgyzstan and in the city of Khujand in Tajikistan. Thirdly and contrary to my own expectations at the start of fieldwork, identification with the cross-border Ferghana valley is marginal. Instead, attachment to this form of transnational loyalty is low, except for marginal and moderate attachment to it in Batken and Sughd provinces and Jalalabat[75]. Finally, city and regions (expressed along north/south cleavages), by contrast, provide stronger loci of allegiance: southern (in Kyrgyzstan) and northern (in Tajikistan) identities are strong, and so also are city-level loyalties. Attachment to cities such as Osh and Khujand nearly equals the strength of national sentiment, and this might prove to have political implications. While cultural forms of identification are strong to various degrees (with some notable exceptions, as mentioned), state identity also appears of particular relevance to a strong majority of Uzbeks in both cases. Three in five respondents seemed to consider themselves as

[75]Note that while 28% of respondents from Jalalabat identified themselves as Farg'onalik on a regular basis, but none among them indicated it as a primary source of identification.

equally Uzbek and citizens of the state of residence. What emerges is a diverse picture of Uzbek communities, where heterogeneity is the norm rather than the exception.

4.4. Conclusion

The chapter has presented a mixed picture of the structural preconditions for Uzbek ethno-political mobilization. Uzbeks in Taijkistan and Kyrgyz Republic show a strong attachment to ethnicity. The group presents a strong sense of cohesion and the presence of this type of resource could facilitate mobilization. Allegiance along ethnic lines is accompanied, but does not replace or supersede by other types of loyalties, such as state, sub-state (regional and local) and supra-state (religion) identities. Moreover, the strength of these loyalties varies according to context, and other factors, namely the area where research was conducted, age or sex of respondent, and even profession. Hence, the seemingly paradoxical situation where ethnicity plays a great role in group identification, while at the same time the group shows a high degree of internal heterogeneity, thereby making ethnic mobilization more difficult. The lack of ethnic institutions which would promote Uzbek identity through the creation of cadres, language, and schools, and especially territorial autonomy contributed to affect negatively the pool of available resources for mobilization. Economic factors seem to matter only up to an extent. In fact, while they have also been affected by the decline in living standards following the Soviet collapse, Uzbeks have manged to maintain their economic niche in some specific sectors, namely the retail trade and the media. This has made transition somewhat less painful compared for example to settler populations, employed either in the public sector or in failing industrial complexes and with little knowledge of any Central Asian language. Also, despite the obvious peculiarities of southern Kyrgyzstan (rural and agricultural) and northern Tajikistan (more urbanized and developed), the economic downturn has affected all regions in those countries, meaning deprivation is spread all across them and not concentrated in one region. Additionally, and this certainly bode well for the future, the long phase of economic decline seems to have ended in around 1997-1998, as the following years have reported some progress and economic growth.

CHAPTER 5

Political Opportunity Structure

Uzbeks, the State, and the Third Party

In this chapter I discuss the structure of political opportunity, here understood as "consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure" (Tarrow, 1998 p.85). The political opportunity structure (hereafter, POS) should be seen as a context within which Uzbek mobilization takes place in light of the constraints and/or opportunities this poses or presents and with which it interacts. This chapter argues that the POS should not be seen as a static or unitary concept, but rather as a cluster of variables in critical interaction with agency as well as with those structural preconditions (examined in chapter 4) which constitute the substratum within which mobilization occurs and is influenced by the policies and practices of the state. This creates an ideal continuum between chapters 4, 5, and 6 because the way Uzbeks identify themselves and relate to the state is both a product of previous action (chapter 4) and framing by group leaders (chapter 6). In this process the role of the state is crucial: the way policies, inclusive or exclusive, and the practices that follow shape the role that minority groups can play in the polity. The extent to which these will feel part of the citizenry will greatly depend on whether it is product of othering from state and titular group. Understanding how the Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani states have been conceptualised (as civic states or nationalising ones) is the object of section I.

Section I discusses the domestic side of POS by looking at how the political system has shaped the possibility for Uzbeks to mobilize. I explore this by looking at three distinct though mutually interacting issues:

- state policies as regards citizenship, language, education, political parties and organizations;

- personalities, by assessing the importance of a particular kind of agency – the president, arguably one of the central actors in the post-Soviet political systems;
- and finally the perceptions thereof from below, looking at how the previous two are perceived by Tajikistani and Kyrgyztani Uzbeks.

Section II adopts a similar format and discusses the role of the third party (besides group and state of residence), the Republic of Uzbekistan. The choice of incorporating the third party within the POS builds on recent insights from scholarship on Central Asia that have called for overcoming the limitations of an analysis centred on seemingly water-proof compartments (inside and outside) in the study of Central Asia (Horsman, 1999b and Megoran, 2002d).

This chapter shows that although the political opportunity structure has played a significant role in shaping the form of Uzbek mobilization and setting its limits in particular, a structural approach is less convincing when it comes to explaining whether Uzbek mobilization would consider the state the referent object of its claims (hence a more confrontational type of mobilization) or if it would rather engage in a mobilizational process which eventually reinforces the POS, specifically its domestic dimension. Second, the chapter also argues that common ethnic ties are not sufficient for a state to act as patron in support of co-ethnics abroad. Other concerns, such as power politics and the paramount importance of state security may take central role, thereby sidelining the place of the "diaspora" in the eyes of the alleged external homeland. This is ultimately stabilising as ethnic minorities are more likely to mobilize in a confrontational way vis-à-vis the state of residence in circumstances of explicit support from the kin country (Cetinyan, 2002; Jenne, 2004).

SECTION I: Policies, perceptions of opportunity and presidential agency

The approach adopted by the state in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to deal with multi-ethnicity is overall similar. Despite obvious country-related specificities, Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani authorities, at different speeds and at different moments in time, have responded to the challenge brought about by weak national identity among the titular group and the country's ethnic complexity with an apparent appreciation of

diversity. Emphasis on the titular group's status in the present and re-construction of a glorious past (with the new national heroes of Manas and Ismoil Somoni) have been accompanied by a caution designed not to alienate minority groups. In both countries state ideology has been carefully phrased and tentative accommodating policies crafted. However, legislation and implementation have turned out to be interpreted very differently and practices have often recalled Brubaker's concept of a nationalising state (1996), though this chapter shows that this view requires qualification.

The discussion in this chapter is based on the following sources:

- state legislation (constitution, language and media laws, laws on public associations, laws establishing associations for minority groups);
- government and other official publications that may illustrate both policy directives and embody state ideology;
- survey and interview data from fieldwork conducted from June to August 2003 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

5.1. Policies

5.1.1. Citizenship

In line with most other former Soviet states (and unlike Estonia and Latvia[76]) Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have adopted a "zero option" approach to citizenship. In fact, the Tajikistani constitution (art. 15) declares that "a person will be regarded as citizen of Tajikistan if he *(sic)* is a citizen of the Republic of Tajikistan on the day of adoption of the constitution" [6th November, 1994]. The question of who should be considered as citizen is not explicitly addressed in the constitution of Kyrgyzstan[77], but is discussed in length in a separate law (Citizenship Law of Kyrgyzstan[78]).

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[76]Galbreath (forthcoming).

[77]The constitution was adopted on May, 5th, 1993 and modified by referendum on February, 2nd, 2003, implemented on February, 18th with the law "On the new wording of the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan" (Kyrgyz Respublikasynyn Konstitutsiyasy, 2003). Section I of chapter II enumerates rights and duties of citizens (artt. 13 and 14).

[78]Available at http://www.coe.int/T/E/Legal_Affairs/Legal_co-operation/Foreigners_and_citizens/Nationality/Documents/Bulletin_and_national_legislation/Kyrgyzstan%20Law%20on%20Citizenship%20of%20the%20Kyrgyz%20Republic.asp#P129_8766.

According to the Law on citizenship will be considered citizens of Kyrgyzstan those persons who:

- "belonged to the citizenship of Kyrgyz Republic as at the date of its adoption of the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan (December 15, 1990) and have not yet stated that they belong to citizen of another state;
- belonged to the citizenship of Kyrgyzstan according to the procedures established with the Law upon the adoption of the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan and have not lost it at the time when this Law is enforced;
- obtained the citizenship of Kyrgyzstan according to the provision of this Law (art. 1)".

Neither of the two countries has introduced language requirements, de facto distinguishing between citizenship rights and the implications of knowing the state language in terms of public life (i.e. employment in the public sector). It must also be pointed out that while Kyrgyzstani authorities have ruled out any possibility of allowing dual citizenship, Tajikistan has reached an agreement with Russia to allow those eligible to have both. No such agreement exists in Uzbekistan, where residents were asked to choose between citizenship of one country or another.

5.1.2. Language

The language issue is actually an umbrella category which in reality subsumes distinct questions: the status of the language; access to information in minority languages; and the possibility of receiving education in minority languages. The Kyrgyz and Tajik SSR replaced Russian as a state language on the eve of the Soviet collapse. The "Language Act of the Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic" (July, 22nd, 1989) defines the legal position of the Tadzhiki (Farsi) language[79], the status of which was upgraded to state language (art. 1). As a result, the Russian language lost such status. This drew immediate protests at the time from minority groups, who perceived the act as threatening their position in the country, especially in light of the fact that Tajiks constituted just about 65% of the overall Tajikistani population at the time. Conditions for the usage and developments of other languages, such as Pamiri and Yaghnobi languages (art. 3), or Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Russian (art. 4)

[79]The ordering of the denomination changed a few times during the nineties. Originally the wording was "forsi (tojiki)", then changed to "tojiki (forsi)", only to be later changed again into "tojiki" only.

are defined by the Act. No legislative acts have been set in place to ensure that practice would follow policy. Although Russian ceased to be the language for "doing business" in 1992, the constitution adopted on November, 6th 1994, further modified language policy. According to art. 2, "the state language of Tajikistan is Tajik. Russian is a language of inter-ethnic communication". A generic protection for other language is referred to in the same article ("[a]ll nations and peoples residing in the territory of the republic have the right to use freely their native languages"). Tajik had become the sole state language by 1996. However, no legal framework exists to guarantee the effective protection of minority languages, which appears very much case-sensitive, i.e. depending on the concentration of the minority in one specific area. The only exception to this lack of legal protection regards the educational system, where classes – at least until university level - continue to be held in the three languages, according to the territorial concentration of a particular community. Official work, written and oral, is to be conducted in Tajik.

With regard to language the situation in Kyrgyzstan appears much more convoluted and tense. In particular the state has failed to address the situation of the Uzbek language (Dave, 2004 p.122). On September 23rd, 1989 the "Law on the State Language of the Kyrgyz SSR" replaced Russian as state language of the republic (art. 1). After declaring that "Kyrgyz is the language of the indigenous population and of the majority of the citizens of the Kyrgyz SSR", the preamble outlines the restrictions in use that the Kyrgyz language has been subject to as a result of the distortions of the Soviet nationality policy. For this reason "the adoption of special measures for the development and protection of the Kyrgyz language with the help of legal institutions and on a legislative basis" are considered necessary. This would contribute to the development of the language and "the national culture of the Kyrgyz people". The emphatic preamble constitutes the first of a series of attempts to enhance the status of Kyrgyz, a language that many in the northern and highly Russified regions spoke at the time of independence[80].

Besides generic principles such as the right of every citizen to choose his/her language of communication (art. 6), or the declaration that other languages would be protected in the republic (art. 4), the only section where languages other than Kyrgyz

[80]Khamidov (2004).

and the interests of the people, that communicate in such languages, are taken into account in chapter 5 (artt. 21-25, "Language in the sphere of education, science, and culture"). However, it is only in the final article of the chapter that it is mentioned that "[I]n places compactly settled by national and ethnic groups (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Germans, Dungans, Uighurs), access to school education, distribution of printed materials and information in the native language, and the development of national cultures are guaranteed". The modalities and the extent to which this protection would be not only guaranteed, but also implemented are not mentioned in the law.

A transitional period was initially set in place until December 31st, 1998, when the actual replacement of Russian with Kyrgyz as sole state language would become effective. The use of the Russian language was not expected to disappear overnight, though. The 1993 constitution (later amended a first time in 1996 and more comprehensively in 2003) granted Russian the status of language of inter-ethnic communication (art. 5). The transitional period passed without leading to a diminished use of Russian. With one in a hundred Slavs being fluent in Kyrgyz and with an elite still predominantly Russian-speaking (Dave, 2004 p.138 and 142), the debate over the use and status of Russian remains central in Kyrgyzstani politics. In 2000 Russian was finally given official language status. Considering that the constitution only allowed one state language, a different terminology ("official") was introduced, although the distinction between state and official remains on the whole undefined. This measure was meant to reassure ethnic minorities and emphasise the multi-ethnic and harmonious nature of the country. On the other hand, it represented the acknowledgement from the state leadership that measures aimed at enhancing the position of Kyrgyz had simply failed. The majority of the population remained comfortable with the use of Russian. The debate on language(s) in Kyrgyzstan clearly shows that it has always been an "affaire à deux", between the Kyrgyz and Russian languages. The demographic composition of the country has significantly changed over the past decade or so, and while the Russian population has decreased dramatically, demographic growth and the relative balance shift between groups has made of Uzbek population the second largest community demographically in the

republic[81]. This created expectations among the Uzbek population that the Uzbek language might also be elevated to the status of official language. However, as Bhavna Dave notes (2004) not only this has never been the case, but the very idea of elevating the status of Uzbek has never made it onto the negotiating agenda, leaving the hopes of the Uzbek community dashed. The reason for this was the widespread concern among Kyrgyz that an initial concession to the large Uzbek community may usher in a series of further demands, possibly leading to calls for Uzbek cultural autonomy or the establishment of an Uzbek region (ibid., p.144). Language has proved a very divisive and politicised issue in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbeks demands have primarily focused on access to information and education in Uzbek language (see later in this chapter).

Alongside language status, equally important is the question over which script the language should be written in. This is a particularly painful question as it carries a highly emotional and symbolic dimension: the separation from other Uzbek speakers. From 1940 until the early nineties[82], the Uzbek language in the whole Soviet territory used to be written in Cyrillic script. However, in 1993 the Republic of Uzbekistan suddenly shifted to Latin. The impact of this policy change was dramatic and affected all Uzbeks, but especially those living in the neighbouring countries. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were already facing problems of their own, by replacing Russian with Tajik and Kyrgyz respectively as state languages, redefining the role of Russian itself, with little resources let alone political will to be spent on fostering what by any standard constitutes a comprehensive change (change in textbooks, printing machines, re-training of large part of the population).

A proper debate on the Uzbek language has not taken place in either country, arguably due to the sensitivity of the issue. Besides mere rhetorical statements of state support for minority languages (itself a label rejected by the Uzbek community[83]) no practical provision of material, support for typographical expenses or else, has been provided[84]. The questions of whether the state should play a role in

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[81]The balance shift is evident when one compares the ethnic composition of the country in 1989 (Uzbeks: 12.9%; Russians: 21.5%) with that of 1999 (1999 Census).

[82] From 1929 to 1940 Uzbek was written using the Latin alphabet.

[83]I explore this question in chapter 6.

[84]Although an official at the Ministry of Higher Education in Tashkent declared that Uzbekistan "still provides Uzbeks abroad with textbooks", he failed to mention any single place where I could go and

this issue, who should take a decision (if any at all) on this, and how language learning should be provided (by whom and with whose money) have not been addressed so far, and the question lies suspended in a vacuum. Questions related to language status and use are those of information and education in languages other than the state one.

5.1.3. Education

According to official statistics of the Tajikistani Ministry of Education there are 55,501 schools (at secondary, secondary-special and higher education level) holding classes in Tajik language (as of 2002). In addition 18,609 are held in Uzbek, 1,424 in Russian, 902 in Kyrgyz, and 155 in Turkmen (Concept of the national policy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2002). If the situation at primary and secondary level (up to the ninth level according to the local education structure) of Uzbek language education does not present any additional problem to all those faced by any other typical school in the country (ie shortage of funding, teachers and textbooks), no university where tuition is provided entirely in Uzbek language has been established in the country. The only option for students who wish to do so is to attend Uzbek classes, which alongside classes in Tajik and Russian provide tuition in various languages in the humanities.

Even in the case of Kyrgyzstan a distinction between primary and secondary education on one side, and higher education on the other should be noted – though the situation is reversed compared to Tajikistan. The prospects for Uzbek language higher education are moderately positive. The opening of two universities in Jalalabat (Batyrov University) and Osh (Kyrgyz-Uzbek University), in areas where the Uzbek population is concentrated, constitutes therefore a remarkable achievement. Along with the study of Russian and Kyrgyz languages (compulsory in the state curricula), these institutions provide Uzbek students with the opportunity to receive tuition in their native language. In addition Osh State University also offers Uzbek language tuition for degrees in pedagogy, traditionally popular among Uzbek female students, and Uzbek philology.

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double-check. In no case I have found confirm of textbooks supply from Uzbekistan to the neighbouring countries. Moreover, given the script change, it would not make any sense for Uzbekistani authorities to send books that no-one would understand.

The establishment of a University in Jalalabat is primarily due to the initiative of Kadirjan Batyrov, a local businessman and chair of the Jalalabat branch of the Uzbek national cultural centre. The Kyrgyz-Uzbek University in Osh is also the result of the initiative of the Uzbek national-cultural centre, in particular of its national president Mukhammadjan Mamasaidov (the university *rektor*). If the situation overall bodes well for Uzbek language in the higher education sector, the same cannot be said for primary and secondary level education. According to the governor of the Osh province N. Kasiev (2003), there are 556 state schools in the Osh province only. Of these 85 use Uzbek as the main language of instruction, 11 use Russian, and 56 adopted a mixed language system of education. According to representatives of the Uzbek community, though, the problem lies in the quality of teaching and the availability of textbooks for students. These are by no means problems peculiar to Uzbek language schools, but the problem is more deeply felt there since Uzbekistan's shift to the Latin alphabet, and the supply of textbooks from Tashkent has come to a halt. In order to tackle the issue two publishing houses have been established (one based at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek University), although many more will have to be established if the question of books supply is to be solved.

A key question concerns whether students living in a multi-ethnic area such as the Ferghana Valley (where most people are tri-lingual), should receive education in their mother tongue only. The Switzerland-based NGO Cimera and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have - separately - been at the forefront of projects directly addressing two dimensions of the language issue: development of mass media and multi-lingual education[85]. The field of education is a critical one for minority and majority alike. Conscious of the centrality of language both in terms of belonging and as a means of communication, this theme has received an increasing degree of attention both from NGOs and, for example, the OSCE as well. Projects such as the Cimera-funded and OSCE-supported "Multi-lingual Education and Mother Tongue Education for National Minorities in Kyrgyzstan" are extremely important. In a non-confrontational manner an extremely thorny issue has been addressed in such a way that joint efforts from different actors (international organizations, central government, local authorities, educational institutions) at

[85]See Cimera's website at www.cimera.org.

different levels have started to deliver results: the creation of schools and kindergartens throughout the country where students are taught in Russian, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek. Multi-lingual education shifts the attention from an understanding of language as a sign of ethnic identification to an approach that sees in language a means of communication and an invaluable means of integration within multi-ethnic societies.

5.1.4. Media

Uzbek-language media are moderately diverse:

- foreign media: Uzbekistani newspapers – which are not delivered in Kyrgyzstani territory except for Darakchi, the TV programme weekly- and TV channels from Uzbekistan (Tv-1, Yo'shlar Telekanali, Namangan TV, Andijon TV);
- media of the local administration: the newspapers Jalalabad Tongi (Dawn of Jalalabat) and O'sh Sadosi (Echo of Osh);
- privately owned media: the newspapers Farg'ona[86], and Musulmon in Jalalabat, the newspaper Demos Times in Osh[87] and TV stations Osh TV, Mezon TV, and DDD.

Uzbek language media are regionally based. Given the marginal presence of Uzbeks in the northern provinces, it comes as no surprise that the Osh and Jalalabat provinces are home to the totality of newspapers and TV stations in Uzbek language. Private TV companies report constant problems with the authorities in respect of the concession of licenses and the number of hours they are allowed to broadcast. Osh TV, has often been at the centre of the authorities' attention[88]. Osh TV, the oldest independent broadcasting company in the region (established in 1991), is an attempt to provide an information channel to the local Uzbek population, and at the same time establish a channel for the whole local population regardless of ethnic origins or linguistic barriers (it broadcasts in Russian and Kyrgyz as well). There are two other

[86]Farg'ona used to be published until Summer 2003 in two editions, Uzbek and Kyrgyz. Due to lack of funding the printing of the Uzbek edition has been suspended.
[87]Also currently suspended.
[88]Sukhov (2000) and interviews with the director of Osh TV Khudaiberdiev and the deputy director of DDD (July, 2003).

channels in southern Kyrgyzstan which broadcast in Uzbek language: Mezon TV and DDD. Whereas DDD mostly broadcasts (Indian and Russian) films, Mezon TV broadcasts news and documentaries alongside entertainment programs. In addition to local channels in border regions it is possible to receive channels broadcast by Uzbekistani TV, typically TV-1 and Yo'shlar, and depending on the location (the signal is extremely weak) of Namangan TV and Andijon TV. Except for the Uzbekistani channels TV-1 and Yo'shlar, the Kyrgyzstan-based ones are licensed to broadcast only for a limited number of hours per day (from a minimum of two to a maximum of six).

The means available to minority media are also scarce at best and some of them can only employ a handful of journalists (the newspaper "Gazeta DDD" consists of three journalists who also help with the printing and distribution of the newspaper[89]). Content-wise Uzbek language media appear un-appealing to many: poems and literary issues dominate the pages, leaving very little space to news, especially those relevant to the Uzbek population (e.g. debates over language status, provision of textbooks). A case in point is the coverage of the recent Assembly (*Kurultai*) of the Uzbek people held in May 2003. Scant coverage has been given in the Uzbek language newspapers, who have mostly focused on reporting the speeches of key figures, without entering into the specifics of the issue on the table.

The situation of electronic media in Uzbek language is that it is almost non-existent. The websites are mostly in Russian, Kyrgyz language, and at times, English language. Kyrgyzstan-based Uzbek language news sites are rare and their presence on the web has been very erratic so far. The site "Fergana.org", a project funded by international organizations launched in Autumn 2003, aims to bring together the three areas of the Ferghana valley divided by state borders and create a source of information for the valley-dwellers. Key to this project is the involvement of journalists not just those based in the three republics, but especially of journalists belonging to the various ethnic groups living in the valley. So far the website is available in Russian only, although versions in other languages are expected in the near future[90]. Additionally, the Russian language newspaper "Sosedy" (Neighbours)

[89] Conversation with the editor of DDD, Osh, June 2003.
[90] Conversation with Almaz Kalet, January 2004.

has been launched in the Spring of 2004 with the aim of bridging the different communities living in the Ferghana Valley separated by state borders.

Similarly to Kyrgyzstan, there is no Uzbek language newspaper published nation-wide in Tajikistan either. Though this can be ascribed to the regional concentration of the Uzbek population in specific areas, a lack of even regionally-based resources is illustrative of the dearth of information in the Uzbek language in present-day Tajikistan. One could object that until now other priorities have dominated Tajikistan's post-war reconstruction. However, the situation affects media in the three main languages spoken in the country (Tajik, Russian, and Uzbek) in different measure, as it is Uzbek language media that seem to encounter the most serious difficulties.

Uzbek newspapers are published and distributed locally. They can be divided in the state-owned and privately-owned newspapers[91]. The former include Sughd-based Leninobod Khaqiqati (The Truth of Leninabad, also published in Russian as Leninabadskaya Pravda and Tajik, Khaqiqati Leninobod), published by the local provincial administration (Khukumat Viloiyati Sughd). The latter instead consist of Tong (Dawn) only. Moreover, there are the publications of the Uzbek cultural associations in the country:

- Xalq Ovozi (The people's voice) newspaper/organ of the Dushanbe branch of the Cultural Centre of Uzbeks;
- Kadriyat, organ of the Khujand branch of the Cultural Centre of Uzbeks ('Tsentr Kul'tury Uzbekov Tadzhikistana'), with a circulation of eight hundred and fifty copies;
- Navruz, organ of the Society of Uzbeks in Penjikent.

In districts where the concentration of Uzbeks is higher, an additional four pages in the Uzbek language are inserted in Tajik newspapers (Proletar Tongi and Qishloq Xayoti in the Jabbor Rasulov district; Xalq So'zi in Nau) or publish one-two pages in Tajik language newspapers (i.e. Ovozi Gonji, Ganji district). Uzbek language information on television is rare and it is possible to note a tendency to decrease the airtime where Uzbek language programs are aired (two hours per week on the main state-owned TV channel). As in the case of Kyrgyzstan, regions closer to borders

[91] Spravochnik SMI Sogdiiskoy Oblasti (2002).

with Uzbekistan receive the signal from TV-1, the main channel from Tashkent, and other local TV channels.

The Tong project

The case of the Tong newspaper well illustrates the situation of mass media in Tajikistan. Tong is part of a project by the OSCE aiming at the establishment of three newspapers in the northern province of Sughd: one in Russian, "Varorud"[92], one in Tajik, "Sughd', and one in Uzbek, "Tong". While the previous two have managed to find a donor that would support the expenses incurred in the running of the publications, Tong has failed to do so, leaving the Uzbek minority understandably disappointed. The newspaper has been published since May 2002, but so far only six issues have been published, the latest of which appeared on July 11th 2003. A point of contention from the Uzbek community's perspective is that while the former two projects have been accomplished and the newspapers established, the one concerning the Uzbek project is still awaiting a donor. The six issues printed thus far had a circulation of ca. 2,100 copies. The paper consisted of sixteen pages addressing a range of issues including local, national, and international news, along with more cultural questions (poetry, linguistic problems, etc). As mentioned above, periodicals are - irregularly - published at town or village level. In most cases these are four pages sheets with news printed in different languages (Tajik, Uzbek, and Russian). As the proposal hints at, the goals of the newspaper are to provide the local Uzbek speaking population with a source of information without being financially and politically dependent on the city or provincial administration. The case of Tong appears particularly interesting because it would represent the only independent newspaper in the whole country to be printed in the Uzbek language.

5.1.5. Census policy and the "piataya grafa"

The use of census as an instrument of nation-building has been investigated both with regard to the early Soviet period and the Uzbek case in particular (Arel, 2002; Hirsch, 1997; and Schoeberlein, 1994 and 1996; Abramson, 2002 respectively). Identifying the actual size of an ethnic group has implications for the nation and

[92]Varorud's website is www.varorud.org.

state-building process, as it entails greater rights for the minority for example. The size of a group has implications that go beyond statistical interest. A large non titular group can feel emboldened by census data and advance demands which it expects to be met out of its numerical strength. From the perspective of the state, a sizeable minority can be viewed with suspicion since it could threaten the identity of the state, particularly when the state and national identities overlap. As noted in chapter 2, this question is particularly thorny in Tajikistan, where the share of Uzbeks has dropped from about 25% to just about 15% over just one decade. A sudden re-appearance of categories previously subsumed in the Uzbek one has raised fears among the Uzbek community that the state may be aiming at deliberately manipulating census categories to Tajikify the country by de-creasing the Uzbek presence. Contentions that figures regarding the number of Uzbeks living in the country may have been downplayed have also been made in Kyrgyzstan.

Data from fieldwork reveal that there are no discrepancies between the passport entry and the respondent's self-identification. In Tajikistan 97.7% of Uzbek respondents also declare themselves as Uzbek in their passport. In Kyrgyzstan this is slightly lower (88.9%), as part of the survey was conducted in areas of the Batken province where Uzbek and Tajik population live closely intertwined (9.3% declared themselves Tajik in the passport, but Uzbek in the questionnaire). No respondent in either Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reported the "benefits" from changing one's own passport nationality. The near total coincidence between passport entry and self-identification appears to confirm this. In the case of Kyrgyzstan one notes a steady increase in both the numbers and share of the Uzbek population. In Tajikistan respondents were also asked to declare their nationality as stated in the passport to check possible discrepancies between one's declared nationality and actual self-perception. 97.7% of respondents stated that the passport nationality is also Uzbek (1.5% Tajik, 0.8% Kyrgyz)[93]. The question of the nationality entry in passports constitutes one of the very few cases where ethnic minorities – overcoming their

[93]These data should be considered with caution. In the case of Kyrgyzstan in 85 cases the question was not posed. Of the remaining 28 respondents answered the question, but 37 did not and left the space blank. In Tajikistan the no response rate was lower (38 cases), while 99 respondents did answer the question.

collective action problems - joined efforts to have the nationality entry – previously abolished in 1996 - thereafter re-introduced[94] on the basis that:

> "Canceling the entry would imply erasing all non Kyrgyz identities'. 'We would all have become Kyrgyz". "You would not hear of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, Uyghurs, or even Russians anymore".

5.1.6. Political representation and political parties

There are no official data as to the presence of ethnic minorities in state and local institutions, which leaves too large a space for speculation, both from titular groups and minorities as well. Neither is it clear what the appropriate level of representation should be. In Tajikistan for example, Tajiks constitute about 80% of the population. Does this mean that they are entitled to a similar proportion of seats, say in the national and local majlises (assemblies)? According to Tajikistan's national policy "concept" (2002) the state "provides the possibility for the national minorities to participate in the public administration". In the 2000-2005 Majlisi Milli (higher chamber of the parliament, Majlisi Oli) minorities accounted for 9% of the seats (three seats out of thirty-four, one each for Russians, Uzbeks – from Nau district - and Kyrgyz), despite the fact that one in five citizens are not ethnic Tajik. Additionally, in the northern Sughd province non Tajik presence rises to ca. 40%, of which the near totality is Uzbek. In local assemblies minority representation appears higher, with chairs of district assemblies or deputies of city and province khukumat in the Sughd province belonging to Uzbek ethnicity.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is analogous. The Jogorku Kenesh (2000-2005) included four Uzbek deputies, pointing to a decline from the previous parliamentary elections (1995) saw eight Uzbek deputies, six Slavs, and six belonging to other minority groups sitting alongside eighty-five Kyrgyz. Though less extreme, the 1995 Jogorku Kenesh hardly reflected the country's ethnic composition, where 41% of the population (non Kyrgyz) won as little as 19% of seats (ibid., p.137).

One should note that in 2000 all four deputies were elected in Osh electoral districts, leaving Jalalabat Uzbeks without representation – for which the re-drawing

[94]Dave (2004, p.142).

of electoral boundaries was blamed[95]. At local level Uzbek representation appears more problematic than in Tajikistan. In Kyrgyzstan, though there are Uzbek deputies in the city and provincial assemblies, no Uzbeks in senior positions (zamestitel') could be found in the southern provinces as of Summer 2003, though there are signs that the situation may be changing. By the mid-1990s Uzbeks occupied less than 5% of key posts in provincial administrations (Dave, 2004 p.145).

The party system is still in its embryonic form in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In fact it is not really possible to speak of political parties in the traditional sense, with clear ideological platforms, programs, membership, internal structure and institutionalization, and a capillary presence in the various regions. On the contrary, political parties appear to be personalized, ideologically vaguely defined and with a territorially weak presence (Abazov, 2003 p.559; Akiner, 2001 p.64-72).

There seems to be very little inclination among the Uzbek elite to join political parties. Only about 15-20% of respondents admitted to having any party affiliation. Uzbeks have progressively been sidelined from political and party life, with political parties and organizations becoming progressively Kyrgyz organizations (that is, with Kyrgyz having the only serious chances to acquire senior positions), thus contributing to Uzbek frustration. The fact that no Uzbek party exists should not suggest that representation of Uzbek interests is non existent. In fact, Kyrgyzstanis tend to vote basing their preferences on personalities and personal/family/clan links rather than on programmes or parties.

5.1.7. Summary

This section has outlined the official policy framework shaping Uzbek life in both countries. While Uzbeks, and for that matter other ethnic minorities, have not experienced an exclusivist legislation of the type implemented in Estonia and Latvia, formal citizenship has failed to turn into equal citizenship with the titular population. Census data and the debate surrounding them show that the state may be reluctant to accept its minority groups as full-fledged citizens. Also, restrictions in the field of political organization may well reflect genuine concerns that allowing ethnic parties

[95]Declaration of the Uzbek Kurultai in Jalalabat 2002 (Khamidov, 2002a).

would establish an effective vehicle of mobilization. To conclude the legislative side appears more satisfactory the then implementation one, or the perception thereof, as the section below confirms.

5.2.1. Perceptions of political opportunity

The scope of this section is to examine Uzbek perceptions of state practices to identify the main contentious areas and outline a typology of Uzbek grievances and demands. The extent to which the main political actor in both countries (namely, the president) has managed to bridge policies and practices will be examined in the final section. General views with regard to the Uzbek situation are mixed in both countries. As tables 5.1 (a to c) show, half of the respondents in Tajikistan (47.3%) and less than a third in Kyrgyzstan (31.0%) expressed positive/very positive views of the current situation in their respective countries with regard to political issues (table 5.1a). More positive views are expressed in respect of the economic and cultural situation (5.1b and c), where nearly half of the Kyrgyzstani respondents considered the economic situation as positive or very positive (47.6%) and about one in three expressed a positive evaluation of the cultural situation (table 5.1c, 64%); nearly two in three Uzbeks in Tajikistan had positive or very positive opinions in this regard (62% and 62.8% respectively). Overall it seems that Tajikistani Uzbeks tend to have a more positive view of the current situation specifically concerning their community. This pictures emerges clearly from interviews with Uzbeks living in northern Tajikistan, who emphasise that although serious questions that should be addressed by the central government (lack of economic opportunities and finances in general, under-representation of the north in the country's political life) do exist, these do not affect Uzbeks only. Respondents in Tajikistan showed a clear difficulty in operating a clear-cut difference between Uzbeks and Tajiks. In both Uzbekistan and some areas of Tajikistan the two peoples have traditionally lived side by side, intermingled, adopted similar customs and spoken each other's language. Northern Tajikistan is arch-typical of this symbiosis between Uzbeks and Tajiks. Uzbekistan's president Islam Karimov's reference to Uzbeks and Tajiks as "the same people speaking two different languages" illustrates well, a view which is widely shared by Uzbeks and Tajiks alike:

"We [Uzbeks and Tajiks] always lived together here, there is no difference between us". "Nationality is not important to us, we all understand both languages". "Customs are the same, we celebrate weddings and funerals in similar ways". "Now we have a border that separates us from Uzbekistan, but in fact there is no real difference between us and them". "Yes, I agree with him [Karimov], there is no real difference between Uzbeks and Tajiks".

The impression that national differences were downplayed is consistent with other studies conducted in Tajikistan[96] and shows that especially in the Sughd province the two groups are well integrated. Sughd Uzbeks emphasised how problems in Tajikistan do not concern one nationality only, but rather the whole population.

"Yes, we have problems here, but who doesn't? 'Everyone has problems here, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Russians". "Problems have nothing to do with nationality, there are no jobs here, whether you are Uzbek or Tajik, it does not matter".

By contrast, respondents in Kyrgyzstan, did not qualify their views in the same way in the same way Tajikistani Uzbeks did, and this could suggest a bigger social distance between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks than between Uzbeks and Tajiks, as Faranda and Nolle have noted (2003).

How do you rate the situation of the Uzbek population in the political, economic, and cultural sphere[97]?

5.1a Political

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Very good	3.6	3.9
Good	27.4	43.4
Not good	54.8	45.7
Don't know	14.3	7.0

5.1b Economic

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Very good	9.5	0.8
Good	38.1	61.2
Not good	39.3	31.8
Don't know	13.1	6.2

[96]Roy (1995); Rubin (1998); Akiner (2001).

[97]In light of the Uzbek reluctance to express openly negative views about something as this might eventually lead something negative to happen (on this see also). For this reason the term in the question was slabo (weak) rather than ne khorosho/plokho (not good/bad).

5.1c Cultural

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Very good	14.5	6.2
Good	49.5	56.6
Not good	26.5	32.6
Don't know	9.6	4.7

In the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks older generations seem to have more positive views of the political and cultural situation, while younger respondents hold positive perceptions of the economic situation, consistent with a view that younger generations tend to express more radical view than older ones. Male respondents tend to express positive views towards the cultural and economic situation compared to female respondents. Also, respondents from rural areas as opposed to urban ones evaluate the overall situation more positively. A similar urban/rural divide exists with regard to the northern Sughd province, where negative views are prevalent in Khujand. Respondents from Dushanbe tend to share similar (positive) perceptions with rural respondents in Sughd, but not with those from Khujand, which means that data aggregate per region conceal some critical differences. Interestingly, this might reflect reported attempts from Dushanbe to divide (and rule) the northern province and diminish Khujand's primacy by supporting competing power centres. Contrary to the Kyrgyzstani case, female respondents assess the situation more positively than male respondents, and older generations also display positive views overall in the three questions. To summarise, in both countries Uzbeks have a more positive view of the cultural situation, whereas pending political questions generate dissatisfaction and negative assessments.

Having established that there are causes of dissatisfaction and grievance, I then explored the content of such grievances and the type of demands Uzbeks consider to be of more pressing concern. I then asked members of the titular group to comment on those findings in order to find out what reactions these findings might elicit among 'titulars' and especially whether they thought that such concerns were justified.

Table 5.2 Are Uzbeks adequately represented in state structures of government?

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Yes	19.0	30.6
No	63.5	45.5
Don't	17.5	23.9

know		

Table 5.3 Do Uzbeks enjoy less rights than Kyrgyz/Tajiks ?

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Yes	56.4	40.5
No	27.1	51.9
Don't know	16.5	7.6

Within the Uzbek population few (19% in Kyrgyzstan and 30.6% in Tajikistan) think they are adequately represented at political level (table 5.2), including in high positions of government or in state organs (security services, army, judiciary, state and local administration). With regard to the economic sphere, it is often argued that Uzbeks occupy a privileged economic niche (they are traditionally a more trade-oriented people than Tajiks or Kyrgyz)[98]. The main bazaar in Osh is home to Uzbek traders, and this also applies to the main market in Khujand. Although Uzbeks tend to occupy niches in the labour market in both countries, one should wonder whether this is the outcome of a deliberate choice or a product of the constraints imposed by the structural environment that leads Uzbeks to insulate themselves from the political realm and deal with trade. In June 2003 I contacted the office of the local mayor in Osh. What I intended to find out was whether a record was being held of the applicants for a job in the local *'Meri'* (mayor). According to the information I was given of the 2,200 applications received for positions at first and second level none came from Uzbek applicants. When I presented this finding to Uzbek respondents, the typical response pointed to the fact that "there is no real point in applying if one already knows that the post will be given to a Kyrgyz".

At local level it is possible to find members of national minorities holding offices at city level (town khokimiyat): in Kara-Tyube, Batken region, the khokim is Uzbek, in Kyzylkya in Tajik and Tajik are his three deputies. In Nookat the khokim is Kyrgyz and the deputy Uzbek. In Uch-Kurgan the local deputy khokim, herself a Korean, noted that "there isn't any Uzbek in high positions at the khokimiyat", but (rather concerned presumably about my interest in the topic) assured the colleague that was working with me "there would soon be one". Overall, however, finding a khokim belonging to a national minority is more the exception than the rule even in

[98]Olimov and Olimova (2002), Tishkov (1995), Huskey (2002).

areas of high Tajik and Uzbek concentration. It is more common, by contrast, to find deputies (zamestitel') belonging to minority groups. This is a widespread practice in the Sughd region, where in fact the issue of cadre is raised only with regard to representation at the Oliy Majlis. Whether individuals in such positions hold real power or whether the office is more ceremonial than anything else, remains an open question. Overall, Uzbeks show a propensity not to make explicit use of the term discrimination, preferring the term "tendency" to prefer members of the titular group to those belonging to other communities. Tendency represents a sort of euphemism, particularly suitable as it captures a phenomenon which is particularly fluid and very hard to verify empirically (discrimination in job employment and career advancement on national basis). Given the well-known divisions along regional lines (in Tajikistan) and in light of the apparent lack of inter-ethnic tensions, I set out to investigate this aspect further, to explore the extent to which discrimination might follow instead regional rather than national lines.

Table 5.4a Do you think that northern Tajikistan is politically discriminated/marginalized?

	Total	North	Dushanbe
Yes	36.6	34.1	42.9
No	26.8	23.9	34.3
Don't know	35.8	40.9	22.9
Other	0.8	1.1	0.3

Table 5.4b If so, on what basis?

	Total	North	Dushanbe
National[99]	45.5	30.8	*81.3*
Regional	36.4	*48.7*	6.3
Consequence of civil war	10.9	10.3	12.5
Other	7.3	10.3	0.0

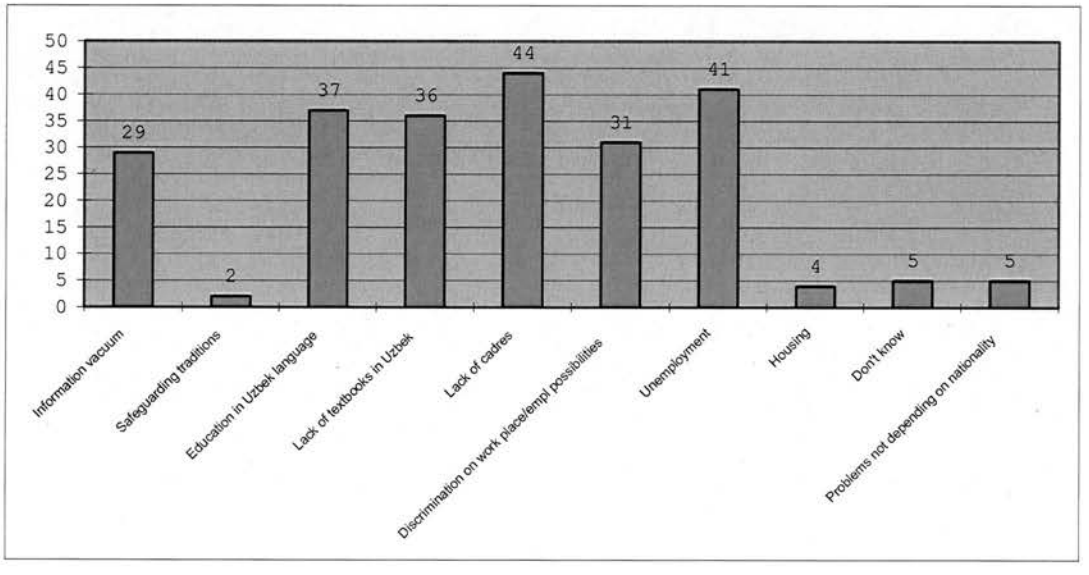
Perhaps surprisingly, only about one third of respondents shared the view that citizens from the Sughd regions suffer from political marginalization/exclusion (34.1% in Sughd). What is more striking is that regional rather than national motivations seem to be at the origins of such tendency, according to northern Tajikistani Uzbeks (48.7%). This is in contrast with respondents from Dushanbe (81.3%) who overwhelmingly suggested discrimination to be nationally motivated (table 23).

[99]"National" refers to the Uzbek/Tajik cleavage.

Data from tables 5.2 to 5.4 (and follow-up interviews) lead to a series of considerations. First negative perceptions are stronger among southern Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks than among northern Tajikistanis. In general, concerns are stronger with regard to the political sphere, where lack of political representation at national level and perceptions of unfair cadre policies appear to dominate the Uzbek political discourse. At the same time a more positive assessment of the cultural situation should not be mistaken for satisfaction with the status quo. There are indeed serious grievances and demands which have been raised: the language issue, understood in a broad sense (textbooks in Uzbek, possibility of obtaining education in primary and secondary schools in Uzbek language, language status) affects to a large extent the whole Uzbek community and, as it will be shown in the next section, dominates the agenda of Uzbek organizations. Predictably, perceptions from minority and majority groups tend to differ with regard to employment policy, with the former noting covert discrimination and the latter by contrast lamenting affirmative action policies in distinct sectors.

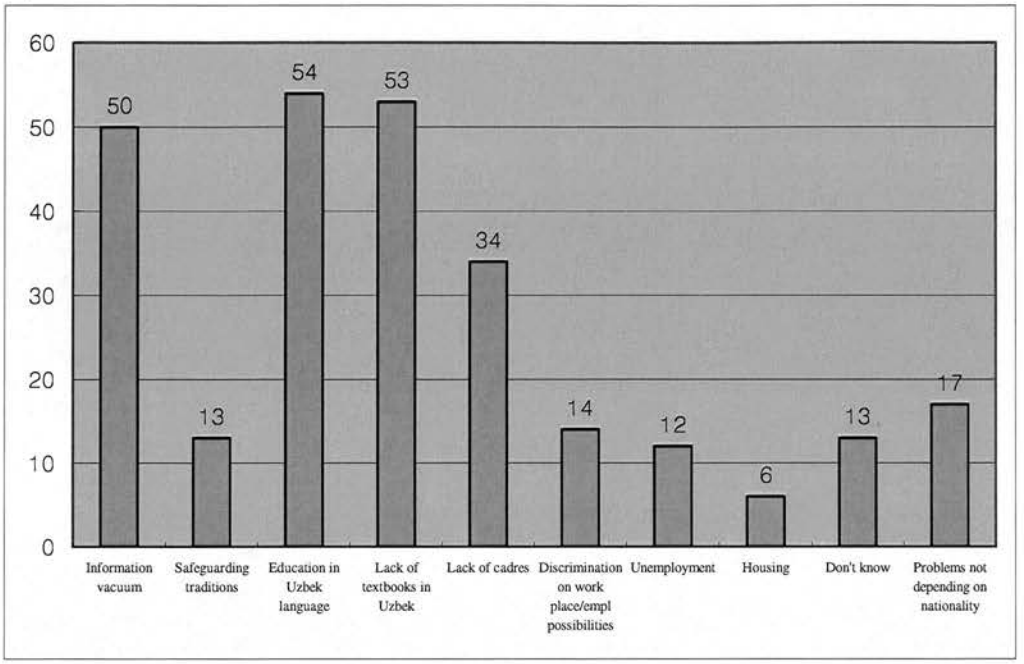
5.2.2 Typology of demands and grievances

Chart 5.1 Types of demands and grievances among the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan[100]



[100]Data were collected by means of a survey conducted in four areas of Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek, and Osh, Jalalabat and Batken provinces) among 85 respondents.

Chart 5.2. Type of demands and grievances among the Uzbek population in Tajikistan



As chart 5.1 shows, three issues appear of immediate concern to Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks: the lack of cadres and of political representation (44 indications), unemployment (41), and cultural/educational issues (education in Uzbek language, 37, and lack of textbooks in Uzbek, 36). Still relevant, but of less immediate concern is the question of information available in native language (29). In the case of Tajikistani Uzbeks (chart 5.2), questions of education (54), language (53) and information (50) are considered more urgent. The lack of cadres, however relevant (34) does not constitute a priority to Tajikistani Uzbeks. A note deserves to be mentioned with regard to the influence that negative perceptions of the Uzbekistani leadership play in this complex matrix. In this regard a recent International Crisis group report (ICG, 2002b) has noted that the popularity of a separatist idea could paradoxically increase with a higher degree of liberalization in Uzbekistan. In fact, as long as the economic and political situation is perceived to be comparatively better in Kyrgyzstan Uzbeks – the argument goes – will have no incentives to mobilize around a separatist agenda[101]. Uzbek respondents tend to avoid taking openly such a hypothesis into account, however remote it may appear. What appears evident,

[101] How at that point the Uzbekistani leadership would react is quite another matter.

however is the importance of the way Uzbeks imagine Uzbekistani and Kyrgyzstani leadership.

A few exceptions aside, I found representatives of the Uzbek elite in southern Kyrgyzstan strongly critical of the Karimov administration. There is a whole segment of the population (young males, especially among students and journalists) that does not hide its fierce opposition to Karimov's policies vis-à-vis religious freedom, border policies, and political freedom in general. As survey data have shown, perceptions of Uzbekistan and of the Uzbekistani leadership among local Uzbeks are not positive. Rather they reflect the often emphasized sensation of being "at a cusp" between a kin country that treats them as foreigners (Uzbekistan) and another which doubts its loyalty (Kyrgyzstan).

Perceptions of effectiveness

Table 5.5a How effective are the following institutions with dealing with Uzbek-related issues (Kyrgyzstan)?

	State administr.	Parliament	UNCC	Province/local administr.	Society of Uzbeks	APK[102]
Very effective	5.9	4.3	4.3	5.3	7.1	3.6
Effective	21.2	19.1	20.0	26.5	27.4	12.7
Not effective	55.9	55.7	49.6	52.2	47.8	61.8
Don't know	16.9	20.9	26.1	15.9	17.7	21.8

Table 5.5b How effective are the following institutions with dealing with issues concerning the Uzbek population(Tajikistan)?

	State administration	Parliament	UNCC[103]	Province/local administration
Very effective	9.9	8.8	0.8	5.5
Effective	45.0	32.8	33.3	52.0
Not effective	36.6	42.4	41.7	30.7
Don't know	8.4	16.0	24.2	11.8

[102]Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan.
[103]Uzbek National-Cultural Centre.

With respect to national policy and inter-ethnic relations opinions among the Uzbek population are quite mixed. About one in two respondents found the Presidential Administration (apparatus) effective or very effective (see table below). Presidential and local/provincial administrations are – as shown in chapter 4 – among the institutions which respondents found more effective in regard to managing ethnic relations. Though deference may have played a role and respondents may have been inclined to express more positive opinions, the overall picture appears quite variegated with only a minor percentage considering the presidential administration as dealing very effectively with ethnic questions (9.9%). Follow-up interviews tended to qualify the opinions expressed in the survey. Respondents who had previously expressed more critical views on leadership effectiveness confirmed that state institutions did not appear particularly successful in dealing with the question of ethnic relations. It is interesting to note how certain types of institutions fared compared to others. The highest and the lowest level (president and local) of aministration were indicated as the most effective in dealing with ethnic questions, whereas intermediate level institutions (parliament) or organizations designed to deal with issues (council, of national-cultural centres) did not meet equally positive responses (again, see chapter 4). While there were no significant variation across areas (the Sughd province and Dushanbe), disaggregating data between rural and urban respondents, one notes how the presidential administration was perceived more positively in the rural areas of the Sughd province than in the city of Khujand itself. This constitutes only a limited surprise, though. During the early post-independence period – indicatively until 1998 – Khujand was home to frequent disturbances and uprisings against the central government in Dushanbe, culminating in the April 1997 assassination attempt on President Rakhmonov during a visit to the city. Ever since, the region and the city of Khujand in particular has been substantially peaceful. Perceptions of effectiveness aside, the near totality of Uzbek and Tajik respondents emphasised how the national question was not a priority in the country and that inter-ethnic relations (perhaps with the exception of the south-western areas) were overall rather good[104].

[104]This is confirmed by surveys conducted throughout the whole post-independence period (Ifes, 1996a; Bozrikova, 2003).

5.3. The impact of presidential agency on shaping the political opportunity structure

5.3.1. The role of Askar Akaev as guarantor of inter-ethnic stability

It would be impossible to discuss the evolution of the political opportunity structure in Kyrgyzstan without without taking into account the crucial role of former President Askar Akaev in shaping the republic's post-Soviet trajectory, most crucially in the early formative years, when Kyrgyzstan embarked on a reform path that made it distinctive from the other countries in the region[105]. Risen to central stage in politics from an academic background and as a compromise candidate between rivalling factions, Askar Akaev embarked upon the uneasy task of guiding Kyrgyzstan through an independence which it did not long for.

Akaev's role in initiating and promoting political and economic reforms has been recognised by many (Melvin, 2001; Dukenbayev and Hansen, 2003; Huskey, 1997 and 2002; Spector, 2004). Spector (2004) convincingly argues that paying attention to the leadership factor helps us understand the particular liberalising and reformist trajectory that the country followed from 1991 to the mid-1990s. Where scholars disagree is in establishing exactly how much Akaev and his personality and leadership mattered. On the one hand Eugene Huskey (1995, 1997a and 1997b, 2002), Bhavna Dave (2004) and again Regine Spector (2004) have recognised the importance of agency and leadership specifically in shaping the course of events. On the other, Pauline Jones Luong (2002) and Kathleen Collins (2003) have argued that other factors – namely regionalism and perceptions of power shifts, and clanism respectively - have been critical and can aid the understanding of Kyrgyzstan's post-Soviet political and economic transformation.

The formulation of a unifying state ideology has been central to Kyrgyzstan's state-building project (Megoran, 2002d p.116). It has given purpose to an otherwise fragmented people. Key has been the will of the political leadership to make inter-ethnic peace a priority in the process of state- and nation-building of the country. Due to the necessity of balancing between clans, regions, and ethnic groups it is hardly surprising that Akaev attempted to present the country with a sort of

[105]When the regime started to resort to authoritarian tactics, by contrast, other variables become equally if not more important to understand the Kyrgyz puzzle.

ideological compromise. The problem is that, as Nick Megoran notes, the result was a policy resting upon internal contradictions (ibid., p.121). Along with the inclusive "Kyrgyzstan is our common home" ideology came an equally important moral guideline, this time "for Kyrgyz only": the re-discovery of the epos of Manas, the legendary Kyrgyz hero. The country's ideological framework was actually bifurcated, in an attempt by the state leadership to give concessions to both Kyrgyz nationalists and representatives of national minorities.

Akaev's incidence on inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan can be illustrated by looking at his role in shaping two policies and establishing two institutions that directly affected the situation of the Uzbek population in the country: the establishment of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan and national-cultural centres; and land and language policies.

First, two institutions have been crucial in providing an institutional and operational framework for the ideology to work: the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan and the national-cultural centres[106]. Given the centrality of the latter to the study of processes of political mobilization among the Uzbek population, this will be the object of a sepatate analysis in the next chapter, where its role will be discussed as a mobilizing structure and an actor in its own right. As to the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan (APK), this institutional body was established in 1994 to advise the president on ethnic matters. The rationale behind the establishment of the APK was the necessity to prevent Osh clashes or similar events from taking place again, and provide a forum where demands and grievances could be voiced and discussed. The goals of the APK are the:

"...realization and protection of interests of all ethnoses, populating Kyrgyzstan, and national minorities of the KR, forming together with Kyrgyz people the nation of Kyrgyzstan; contribution to everything that pulls together all ethnoses of Kyrgyzstan, their familiarization with universal humanistic values; the prevention of the intense situations connected to multinational relations; prevention of confrontation and extremism displayed in the international relations"[107].

[106] These have been briefly outlined in this chapter and will be discussed more in detail in chapter 7.
[107] Available at http://eng.president.kg/president/intpolicy/asemblykrenv

The APK comprises all the national-cultural associations registered in the country, each of which has its own representative in the forum. The choice of the denomination is already illustrative of the attempt of the Kyrgyzstani leadership to define a nation based on the inclusive criteria of citizenship rather than in ethnic terms. Rather than an Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan, which would have reflected the multi-national nature of the country, the choice of the singular form emphasises the unity of purposes and the formation of one Kyrgyzstani people.

Akaev's policy of concessions confirms Megoran's argument that Akaev has actually based his administration on a contradictory balance between nationalists and the exigencies of including ethnic minorities. A concession to one side seemed to be balanced by one in the opposite (such as changing the country's official name into a more ethnically charged Kyrgyz Respublikasy). None the less, this should not conceal the significant improvement made by the state administration to reform the country and institutions. Two additional issues clearly illustrate Akaev's role: the land and language issues.

First, land distribution arguably constituted one of the root causes of the 1990 Osh conflict, when tensions escalated into open confrontation between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. The question of land property and allocation was particularly (hotly) debated in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period. Riding the wave of ethnic revival, Kyrgyz authorities in 1991 passed a law which declared "land and natural resources the wealth [dostoyanie] of the Kyrgyz people" (Huskey, 1997a p.254). According to the law, ethnic groups were entitled to rights of use, possession and alienation. The fact that property became a right of the titular group raised inter-ethnic tensions which were soothed only after Akaev's intervention in vetoing the law in April 1991 (Bohr and Crisp, 1996). The reference to the Kyrgyz nation was later replaced as follows: '[l]and is the property of the peoples of Kyrgyzstan. Akaev's timely action helped prevent a repetition of the May-June 1990 events, when the re-allocation of 32 hectars originally belonging to an Uzbek collective farm to ethnic Kyrgyz represented the spark which ignited the subsequent conflict (Huskey, 1997a p.262).

Second, the language debate in Kyrgyzstan has been one of the defining elements of the state- and nation-building project. Russians inhabit urban centres

especially in the north, whereas Uzbeks are concentrated in the south. Strong divisions exist between Kyrgyz, as the most Russified or them are not fluent in the Kyrgyz language and tend to use Russian at work and home as well. Soon after independence negotiations and discussion over the status of Russian began. However, it was not until May 2000 that Russian was declared the state's second official language. As noted earlier in the chapter, despite the requests of the Uzbek community, the issue as to whether Uzbek should be also recognised as official language, possibly in the south only, never appeared on the agenda owing to the fear that granting Uzbek an official status might be the first step towards further demands. Compared to the situation in other post-Soviet countries, where the debate involved the status of the Russian language alongside that of the titular population, the controversy over language (status) acquired a "triangular dimension" in Kyrgyzstan (Dave, 2004), given that Uzbek population demanded that the Uzbek language be recognised with official status at a national level, or at least in areas of greater Uzbek concentration. This request, among the thorniest to be addressed by the country's leadership, has thus far remained without following and therefore unresolved, leaving the Uzbek population very much frustrated. The debate over the language(s) which should and would be granted official status began well before the Soviet collapse and is in fact not over yet. The situation of Kyrgyzstan is actually quite peculiar, Dave observes (2004 p.120), because it concerned the possibility or in fact the "remedial" (ibid., p.125) measures to be taken in order to redress the Russification policies of the Soviet era which were perceived as the cause of the low level of fluency in Kyrgyz by the titular population. Especially in urban centres and in the north, Russian used to be the language in which most Kyrgyz expressed themselves. What was the point then, of replacing it with a language very few spoke?

As Dave notes, there are widespread fears among the Kyrgyz population, especially but not only in the south, that granting Uzbek a special (official) status would sooner or later open the way to demands for an official recognition of the status of the Uzbek population in the southern provinces. Rooted in the Soviet mindset that federal institutions and devolution could be synonymous with future secession, the possibility of an Uzbek autonomous region (which very few Uzbeks

demand, though) is perceived as a threat to the territorial integrity of the Kyrgyzstani state and therefore does not even come onto the agenda.

Akaev's concessions did not stretch to the point of providing the Uzbek language with a status equal to that granted to Russian. In fact, the Uzbek language never figured in any official policy resolution or even draft. It looked at times as if one seventh of the country's population were not Uzbek speakers. In sum, Akaev has vetoed or rejected parliamentary attempts to legislate in a way that could have threatened inter-ethnic stability. This has been successful overall, and certainly is to Akaev's credit. However, the situation has progressively deteriorated throughout the past decade, with increased signs of authoritarianism, reliance on a narrower circle of elites and marginalization not only of opposition but of minority group as well[108].

Throughout his tenure in office, Akaev has constantly relied on the support and loyalty of the country's ethnic minorities. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, this stems from very pragmatic considerations from both Akaev and the minority groups themselves. Whether they actually like or trust each other is nearly irrelevant. What matters is that Russian and especially Uzbek support for the current administration arises from the consciousness that there are no alternatives (or put differently, any alternative is expected to be worse – hence, the logic goes, better to keep what one has already). Uzbek support appeared crucial in the 1995 elections, as without the votes of the Uzbek population Akaev would have trailed the communist candidate Absamat Masaliev in the south – which would have led to a completely different electoral geography in Kyrgyzstan. The situation repeated itself in 2000 (presidential elections) and 2003 referendum, where again – though arguably less enthusiastically – Uzbeks turned up en masse to bring their support to the incumbent (2000) and the president's proposed constitutional amendments.

Why was this the case? After all, the Uzbek population has been reported as disgruntled and increasingly isolated due to a lack of political representation and a lack of possibilities of obtaining information and education in Uzbek language. Besides the fact that most grievances have only been marginally addressed, Uzbeks continue to consider the current administration and Akaev in particular as the "lesser of two evils", the other being a more nationalist personality (though one can not

[108]The nomination of a Russian to the post of prime minister can be seen as a mere façade, if not accompanied by real re-distribution of position and power sharing at both central and local level.

speculate about the identity, as the opposition is so fragmented and divided itself). Fear of change prevails over what is widely regarded as the unnecessary gambling of one's own future (the Uzbek community's), and this explains the continued support over the years. Rakhmonov in Tajikistan still enjoys similar political dividends due to his stabilising role. Similarly one may wonder how long these dividends are going to pay in Kyrgyzstan as recent unrest (the 2001-2003 period being the most violent in the country since the Osh events) seemed to suggest a season of instability.

Neil Melvin (2001) points to the important role that regionalism and regional networks (identities and interests and power groups) play in the country. One would nevertheless miss an important element which crucially helped maintain Akaev's grip on power if the uncoupling of regional divides from the Uzbek side were neglected. This helps explain how the balance of power in Kyrgyzstan has (or has not) shifted during the 1990s and how Akaev has managed to preserve and consolidate his power. Uzbeks are seen as a sort of fifth column of northern Kyrgyz actors. In fact, this seems to be a largely held perception among southern Kyrgyz who represent the segment of society most discontent with the current regime. The March 2002 riots in the southern village of Aksy were much more than a clash over Beknazarov's fate or the country's leadership handling of the opposition. This was a highly significant sign that the regional balance may be at risk or that at least it is far from secure. Melvin underlines the significance of the shift in the balance of power between regions and elite groups in late Soviet Kyrgyzstan (2001 p.178), and notes how during the Soviet era Uzbeks enjoyed the presence of open borders with Uzbekistan and cultural and political privileges in the country. Higher birth rates among the Kyrgyz and the effects of the elite replacement policy under the perestroika profoundly affected the regional balance of power and put the Uzbek position at risk. The importance of regional and clan-based divisions to understand the potential for (in)stability in Kyrgyzstan has been emphasised by many authors (Jones Luong, 2992; Dukenbayev and Hansen, 2003). Erosions of privileges pushed for calls for autonomy in the early 1990s (Melvin, 2001 p.178-182) following the perception that deals between Kyrgyz regional leaders would eventually marginalize Uzbeks from political life. That this did not happen is to the credit of Akaev's strategy of balancing different regional groups and in particular relying on the

support of ethnic minorities. This entailed the adoption of a divide and rule approasch in the south, where Uzbek loyalty to the centre was rewarded with concessions in the cultural realm. The policy of "un-coupling" Uzbeks from the regional (southern) networks had long-lasting effects.

Until 1993-94 Uzbek support was critical to Akaev's rule, as he came to power without having a power base of his own (being an outsider to Kyrgyz politics). As soon as the president began consolidating his power by relying more and more on regional governors (hakims), Uzbek support became less indispensable, though still retained its centraliy in terms of the rhetoric of 'Kyrgyzstan is our common home'. A new phase then began in the mid-1990s in the relationshisp between Akaev and the Uzbek community, where the latter's support has become less a matter of "faith" or trade-offs (something that critical viewers among local Uzbeks now blame the official leadership for) and more of fear of the instability that may arise from Akaev's exit from politics. In essence, 'who knows who will come after Akaev?' has replaced trust and confidence in the president's ability in balancing different regional and ethnic interests.

5.3.2. Emomali Rakhmonov and the "Dangharization"[109] of the country

Rakhmonov's ascent to Tajikistan's presidency (and earlier chair of the national parliament) derives much from his being a protégé from a then warlord (Sanjak Safarov, leader of the southern-based militia Popular Front) as well as the widespread perception that his being alien to both the political establishment and any other elite circle would make him easier to manoeuvre (Atkin, 2002). While these may well have been the critical factors at the time, Rakhmonov has increasingly carved for himself some autonomy from his patrons, and finally reversed the roles by consolidating his power and power base, thus marginalizing the warlords he previously relied on[110].

[109]From the name of the president's village of origin, Danghara (near Kulyab). I prefer the term to Kulyabization as this overlooks at the internal heterogeneity and disparity of access to power and resources across the region.

[110]In this context can be situated the recent arrests of previously close allies (ICG, 2004).

It is safe to argue that ethnic policy has not been a priority for the Rakhmonov's administration, at least until very recently[111]. Muriel Atkin characterises Rakhmonov's presidency as one of "ineffective authoritarianism" (2002). Rakhmonov enjoyed no real power or authority, Atkin contends, as he was chosen to rule a war-torn society from within a divided coalition (Cummings, 2002b p.6). Starting from a position of "diminished agency", given his crucial reliance on Russian backing[112] and dependence on his clients for support in the country, through the years Rakhmonov consolidated his precarious hold on power, making use of it to reward clients and deflect criticism (Atkin, 2002 p.97), although the extent to which Dushanbe's writ applies to the whole country remains somewhat dubious. With the post of president having been abolished in 1992, Rakhmonov became the country's de facto acting president in those years. The post was re-established in 1994 and Rakhmonov was elected in a very controversial election with about 60% of votes. The challenger at that time, former prime minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov, received a large degree of support from his native province of Sughd/Leninabad (95% of the vote) but was eventually defeated. A feud began between the two which eventually led to the exile of Abdullajonov (whom the president deemed too resourceful, Akbarzadeh, 2001) and a series of uprisings, allegedly orchestrated by him, against the Rakhmonov administration in 1996-98. Ever after Rakhmonov adopted a stance which equated the so-called third force led by Abdullajonov (the Movement for National Renewal , based in Khujand) with the whole northern region, assuming that the province would follow Abdullajonov by default. This was not the case, but Rakhmonov's position on the issue has not changed ever since, leaving the north virtually out of the political process. Though on the one hand Rakhmonov has established himself as a credible leader (Akiner, 2001 and ICG, 2003) out of his role as guarantor of stability, he has increasingly relied on a narrow(er) elite group, marginalizing real or imagined challengers, as was the case with the so-called "third force" and generally isolated north.

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[111]Since 2000 the Dushanbe office of the OSCE has provided legal advice to the country's administration in regard to the formulation of a national concept (nationality policy). Drafts have been circulated thereafter, often meeting resistance or scepticism from minority groups (author's interviews in Dushanbe August 2003).

[112]Tajikistan has from many been defined as nothing more than a Russian protectorate (i.e. Rubin, 1998).

While Atkin and Akiner insightfully examine Rakhmonov's agency in the complex process of state-building in a war-ridden country, they do not seem to consider the impact that his reliance on a narrow power base (now restricted to his native Danghara valley, particularly the villages of Danghara and Farkhad[113]) has had not only on intra-Tajik relations, but on inter-ethnic relations as well, given that the Uzbek share in power structures has decreased sharply throughout the years. Atkin also notes that in the late Soviet era Uzbeks enjoyed considerable protection, which can partly be ascribed to the fact that the then ruling faction of Leninabad is in fact quite Uzbekified (due to closer contacts with Tashkent than Dushanbe in Soviet times), but also to the liberalising reforms that made Tajikistan among the most pluralistic societies in pre-independence Central Asia. In ultimate analysis, while he may not have defined his terms in office by the sign of inter-ethnic stability and harmony in the same way Askar Akaev had, – arguably there are other priorities, such as poverty reduction, reconstruction of institutions and infrastructures –, the badly concealed process of monopolization of power positions from Dangharis (causing dissatisfaction among other Kulyabis too) can potentially cause a fall-out on the so far stable inter-ethnic relations.

As said, Rakhmonov's agency in ethnic matters has been limited for a number of reasons, not least the existence of other priorities in the country's post-war reconstruction. The establishment of cultural organizations has much in common with the neighbouring Central Asian states and owes more to Soviet practices of control than to individual agency in guaranteeing minority groups representation. Only recently have Tajikistani authorities entered into a dialogue with representatives of ethnic minorities under the pressure of international organizations. Negotiations over the adoption of a national policy under the auspices of the OSCE may represent an initial step in recognising the centrality of stable inter-ethnic relations to the country' success in the state-building process. Another sign of progress is perhaps less visible, but potentially more far reaching in that it affects the crucial question of local government and decentralization of power (Olimov and Olimova, 2002). This policy has no ethnic connotations or rationale, but the positive implications of local communities empowerment can address part of the yet un-

[113]ICG (2001c).

addressed question of representation of minority groups because strengthening local self-government - through the creation of territorially defined institutions such as the jamoat, organs of local of self-government - might eventually de-centralize power and invite broader participation of the local population in local affairs (ibid, 2002 p.261).

Overall Rakhmonov's legacy is mixed. He has played a major role in preserving peace and stability, but he has also failed to open a dialogue with whoever did not sit in his restricted circle of allies, thereby exacerbating tensions, regional and, more recently, intra-regional too. With regard to the specific question of ethnic relations, Rakhmonov has played a less crucial role than his counterpart in Kyrgyzstan. This can be ascribed to the fact that national differences do not constitute the most significant cleavage in the country, particularly so during the civil war. Rakhmonov enjoyed a significant level of support among the Uzbek population (especially in the south-west) during the conflict, and the significance presence of Uzbeks in the Popular Front (supporting the Kulyabi faction) tends to support this claim. Rakhmonov's popularity in the north was less certain especially during the civil war, but that had less to do with nationality and more with perceptions of shifting the balance of power in the country. His role in bringing the conflict to an end and maintaining stability is openly acknowledged by the population regardless of ethnic belonging. There are signs none the less that his power, authority and popularity are being eroded, as a recent report seems to suggest[114]. Should the monopolization of power position in the hands of very restricted power factions, and the subsequent marginalization of the north continue, Uzbek support for the current leadership could be expected to decline sharply, although at the moment there is no sign to indicate that such a tendency is already in place.

5.3.3. Summary

The impression is that Tajikistani and the Kyrgyzstani authorities have realised both the potential for conflict if grievances are not properly addressed and the potential for growth if non titular group are integrated in the country's social fabric as full citizens. Critical to any improvement that there has been was the agency of both

[114]ICG (2004).

presidents – and Akaev's in a more marked way. However, if policies have been crafted with the general aim of inclusion in mind practices and perceptions thereof that raise more concerns among the Uzbek population in Kyryzstan and Tajikistan. It seems that the main concern for state authorities has been to channel or even funnel possible voices of discontent through the creation of top-down organizations (national-cultural centres, discussed in depth in chapter 7). While reports on inter-ethnic relations and more generally on the perceptions of minority groups on the overall situation of the respective country are promising (Ifes 1996a, Bozrijkova, 2003 and 2004 for Tajikistan; Ifes 1996b and 2001, Tabyshalieva et al., 1998, Faranda and Nolle, 2003 for Kyrgyzstan), much remains to be done to allow full participation of minority groups in public life which has certainly not been encouraged by the authoritarian shift undertaken by both presidents.

SECTION II

5.4.1. Is Uzbekistan the ethnic patron of Uzbeks abroad?[115]

An attempt to understand the opportunity structure within which Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have operated and with which they have interacted cannot be complete without taking into account the policies of the Republic of Uzbekistan toward them and the states they live in. How Uzbekistan and Uzbeks living in close proximity to Uzbekistan's state boundaries interact has important implications for the process of nation and state-building in the host countries, in Uzbekistan itself, and for the way Uzbek co-ethnics abroad define themselves vis-à-vis the previous two states.

In a series of insightful contributions Brubaker (1992, 1994, 1996) has conceptualised the type of relationship between national minorities, states of residence and the country where the largest part of the minority's kins live (external homeland) as a "triadic nexus", a dynamic interplay between three fields of action, corresponding to the three above-mentioned actors. Brubaker's framework has been undoubtedly successful and has been applied (at least part of it) to make sense of

[115]A preliminary discussion of some of the findings presented in this section has been published under the title "Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan and their relationship with Uzbekistan", in the *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, 3(2), 2004.

analogous dynamics even in the nationalising states of post-communist Eurasia (Smith et al., 1998). This section engages Brubaker's model and points to the limitations inherent in conceptualising relations between kin and host state and co-ethnics abroad within such a framework. This section seeks to look at the extent to which the so-called "Uzbek diaspora" is (at all) an issue in Uzbekistan's national ideology and asks whether this has played any role in the republic's foreign policy (conception and action). In order to do so I proceed as follows. First I review the salient moments of post-independence Uzbekistani policy towards two of its neighbours (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and seek to understand whether "ethnic ties" have in any way guided Uzbekistan's action or alternatively which other guiding policy might have inspired the Uzbekistani leadership (in fact, a security discourse). Secondly I look at the way Uzbeks abroad are perceived by Uzbekistani Uzbeks.

Drawing on data from a qualitative study conducted in Uzbekistan in Winter 2002 and Spring 2003 I show that Uzbeks abroad are not accorded a high priority in Uzbekistan's state-building project or foreign policy agenda. Finally I turn to Uzbek co-ethnics themselves and discuss how politically active members of the Uzbek population in the neighbouring states relate to Uzbekistan and what, if anything, they expect from the neighbour. I conclude that domestic concerns (fear of a chain effect on its own minority groups, and a foreign policy discourse dominated by security concerns) have thus far guided Uzbekistan's geopolitics. In this conception Uzbeks abroad occupy only a marginal place. The lack of links with the ethnic homeland calls into question all assumptions regarding the use of Uzbek minorities as a fifth column of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

5.4.2. A "Geopolitics of fear"[116]? Building Uzbekistan

Nick Megoran critically notes (2002) how existing studies on Uzbekistan discuss its foreign policy conduct separately from domestic affairs[117]. Understanding Uzbekistan's geopolitics and relations with its neighbours, Megoran contends, cannot

[116]Megoran (2004b). Fear, as the section shows, refers to the creation of a security discourse, indeed a securitization of domestic and foreign policy, as well as religion and more broadly political dissent, who are constructed as posing an immediate security threat to the state and hence require urgent action in response. On securitization in general see Buzan et al. (1998) and on the case of Uzbekistan within the context of the war on terror see Horsman (2005).

[117]Megoran essentially discusses three: Bohr (1998), Melvin (2000) and Yalcin (2001).

be done in isolation from an analysis of the country's domestic politics. This entails a study of the project of state-building and in particular of the role the ideology of national independence has played in forging the country's new identity and worldview[118].

Stability (the preservation of peace and order within the country's territorial borders) has become the mantra of Uzbekistan's geopolitics. Uzbekistan's discourse of stability has been constructed against a series of others (Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism) which pose a threat to the security of the country. While the nature of these threat is to a certain extent real, they have also become central to the strategy of self-legitimation of the Uzbekistani political elite. The ideology of national independence has provided the regime with the conceptual framework to locate these real or imagined threats within the discourse of peace, order and stability within the country. The opposition between inside and outside in Uzbekistan's geopolitics is stark. Beyond the fences of "Fortress Uzbekistan" lies the realm of instability and disorder which the current leadership has prevented from spilling over into Uzbekistani territory. Tajikistan, with its tentative democratic openings in early 1990s, the formation of a coalition government with the Islamic opposition in the second half of the decade and the collusive ignorance of IMU militants operating on its territory, easily became Uzbekistan's significant and negative other.

This dimension of Uzbekistan's (security-centred) ideology should be complemented with a second dimension which has more to do with the construction of a state and national identity. Despite claims of the current leadership that Uzbekistan-ness (*O'zbekistonchilik*) is the political identity and the counter claims from ethnic minorities that in fact *O'zbekchilik* and *O'zbekistonchilik* are coterminous, the reality appears more complex. As observed in chapter 2, Uzbek national identity is a recent construct and, as the political formation within its current boundaries, owes its historical development more to the Soviet nationality policy than to Amir Temur. In the wake of independence the state leadership was forced to look for political legitimacy, which it lacked also due to its passivity in the struggle for independence. The Uzbekistani authorities were then faced with a challenge: to

[118]For an insightful study of Uzbekistan's ideology of national independence – which is rather appropriately labelled "Karimovism" by the author - see the recent essays of Andrew March (2002a and 2002b).

privilege an inclusive and citizenship-based identity or to build an exclusive ethnic Uzbek identity (itself to be constructed, due to the significant regional heterogeneity of the country) and alienate minorities. In the end Uzbekistan eventually chose not to choose and this explains the contradictory nature of its nation-building process. I argue that the study of how Uzbekistan relates to Uzbek co-ethnics abroad best illustrates the contradictory nature of its own nation-building process. Understanding the significance that ethnic ties have in driving Uzbekistan's regional policy also reveals what dimensions (ethnicity, territoriality or else) are being privileged as criteria for defining the nation.

So far, caution if not denial has dominated Uzbekistan's relations with Uzbeks abroad. The issue is indeed very sensitive as perceived support for Uzbeks in Khujand, for example, might lead to unwanted domino effects within its (Uzbekistan's) own territory. In light of the priority given to the discourse of stability it comes as no surprise that whatever is perceived as a threat to it (directly or indirectly) is "othered".

The theme of unity is also crucial. In this respect it is clear that between the unity of the state and unity of the nation the Uzbekistani leadership has chosen the former. This requires the integration of non-Uzbek groups into the larger Uzbekistani nation (O'zbekistonlik as opposed to O'zbek). This is actually something different from the traditional dichotomy between an ethnic and a civic conception of the nation. As Aleksandr Djumev notes in an insightful study of how Uzbekness is being constructed in the country (2001), the consolidation of the "great Uzbek(istani) nation" builds on the acceptance, from minority groups, of the values of *O'zbekchilik* (Uzbekness). The combination of past and present is necessary to ensure the country a great future (the theme figures everywhere in the country's iconography with the slogan *O'zbekiston – kelajagi buyuk davlat*[119]). This can only be achieved if stability is maintained. Stability in the country can only be achieved by gradual reforms and the Uzbek model of development (Karimov's concise wording of *"sekin, sekin"*[120] captures the nature of this process). With this respect auhoritarianism is legitimised as a necessary evil:

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[119] "Uzbekistan is a country with a great future".
[120] 'Slowly, slowly.

"[...] perhaps in my actions there are signs of authoritarianism. But I explain as follows: in certain periods of history, especially during the construction of statehood, strong executive power is necessary. It is necessary in order to avoid bloodshed and conflict, to preserve in the region inter-ethnic and civil harmony, peace and stability, *for which I am prepared to pay any price*" [my italics] (Karimov, 1996 cited in March, 2002a p.372).

Stability is not only internal. In the case of Uzbekistan, in fact, preservation of stability has often implied protection from spill-over from neighbouring countries. This long premise is necessary to situate Uzbekistan's regional policy in perspective. It does not take place in a vacuum, but rather it appears to be highly influenced by the project of state-building. How does all this affect Uzbekistan's worldview and in particular its relations with Uzbeks living in the other Central Asian republics? Outside threats have become increasingly[121] central to the country's political discourse and ideology. Islam Karimov's *Uzbekistan on the threshold of the twenty-first century. Threats to security, conditions of stability and guarantees for progress* (1997) probably best exemplifies the Uzbekistani regime's preoccupation with fear of instability. The outset of the volume sounds like a warning despite the father figure-like image Karimov has often conveyed:

> "[w]hat kind of period will the 21st century be for the inhabitants of Uzbekistan? [...] Are we aware of difficulties on the road to reform [...]? [A]re we aware of the threats to our stability and security?" (1997 p.4).

Karimov continues to outline his vision of security: "the support for indivisibility of security as a permanent process with no limits, the threat posed by ethnic, regional and local conflicts and aggressive separatism, the lack of a collective security system in Uzbekistan's proximate environment, terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms trade, and ecological problems" (ibid., p.10-13). A separate mention is reserved to a particular kind of threat: Uzbekistan's "encirclement by countries burdened with ethnic, demographic, economic and other problems" (ibid., p.11). Uzbekistan's geopolitical environment is elevated to the level of problem *per se* and Uzbekistan is the only

[121] In a study of how President Karimov's extensive work has changed in the post-independence era, Megoran notes a progressively sombering of tones.

bulwark against chaos[122]. What seems to worsen the situation is the fact that "these [Afghanistan, Tajikistan] where the Uzbek diaspora are the most numerous among foreign ones" (sic) (ibid.). Later in the volume Karimov outlines a way out of the quagmire: the inviolability of borders (p. 25), the importance of a country's multi-ethnic character to stability and security (p. 59), and the significance assigned to the links with Uzbek communities living outside Uzbekistan (p. 71): "[t]he unity of any nation, the Uzbek nation included, implies close linkages with its ethnic brothers, living in other sovereign states, including the Central Asian countries" (ibid.). The question of cross-border minorities ("separated nations", p. 25) is primarily discussed as a source of threat:

"the ongoing conflicts give some people a possibility to exaggerate the problems of 'separated nations'. Often a deliberate selection of arguments in favour of, for example, the unification of Tadjiks or Uzbeks and Pushtun tribes on both sides of the border with Afghanistan. It is terrible to imagine the consequences of any attempt to change the existing borders using the ethnic principles of division".

Although the presence of Uzbek communities in the neighbouring countries has often been highlighted as one of the possible tools in the hands of Tashkent to influence the course of politics in the neighbouring countries, a review of a decade of Uzbekistan's regional politics reveals its restraint in playing the 'Uzbek card'. A reversion to more traditional instruments of power politics has been preferred. I illustrate the way the significance (or lack thereof) of ethnic links in Uzbek self-definition by drawing on a series of qualitative studies I conducted in Uzbekistan in Winter 2002 and late Spring 2003[123].

5.4.3. Elites' views on the diaspora

In Uzbekistan I sought to explore the way Uzbekistani Uzbek elites relate to those co-ethnics living in the neighbouring countries. What I intended to uncover was the

[122]For such a deterministic view of Uzbekistan as a "necessary hegemon" see Alimov (1995).

[123]I initially conducted seven focus groups (for a total of twenty-nine respondents) and seventeen individual semi-structured in-depth interviews in Tashkent and Samarkand to test perspectives from the periphery with those from the centre. The study essentially involved a small sample from the Uzbek cultural elite that for its own profession and status in society is more likely to be familiar with issues regarding nationality, the role of history in a nation's consciousness, etc. In the spring of 2003 I briefly returned to Tashkent for further testing of my initial findings. On that occasion I interviewed a further twelve respondents.

general attitude, the extent to which local respondents perceive other Uzbeks as part of the same nation, and whether Uzbekistan should do more to maintain links with them. The rationale behind this stage of the research lay in exploring an often under-studied dimension of Uzbek nation-building, that is the extent to which relations with the diaspora affect identity formation in the "homeland". The small sample (fifty-eight respondents) makes generalizable claims impossible; however it is possible to draw any consideration on the small amount of data available.

Respondents pointed to the lack of information available on the topic. One fourth of respondents admitted difficulty in providing any meaningful answer. If to these are added those who argued that "there was no point for me to investigate what Uzbeks in other republics did or thought" (ca. 8%) about one third of respondents did not have sufficient information on which to ground an opinion or was not willing to express it. Of those who answered, very few could go beyond phrases of circumstance ("yes, we are all Uzbeks"; "Uzbeks are always Uzbeks", "Uzbeks are Uzbeks everywhere", "blood is the same, so they are Uzbeks", "we speak the same language"). Scarce information derives from a lack of public debate on the subject (in Uzbekistan's strictly controlled media) which in turns is a product of the sensitivity of the issue.

What responses from Uzbekistani Uzbeks seem to suggest is that they do not regard Uzbeks living on the other side of the border as different. What instead emerges is the effect that the increasing isolation of Uzbeks abroad from Uzbekistan can have on their self-identification. This, I was repeatedly told, could lead them to increasingly adopt the traditions of their place of residence. "If they live long in Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan, they will become more like Kyrgyz or Kazakh", a researcher from Samarkand noted. This view is shared by most respondents. When I asked about their reaction to this process of indigenisation, the response was generally a positive one. "If that is the place where they [Uzbeks abroad] live it is normal that they take up the customs of the place where they live. Like here, in Uzbekistan, other groups are becoming Uzbek". Mutual expectations ("do not mess up with your neighbour if you do not want him to mess up with you") seem to be a tacit dogma.

Officially Uzbekistan does not have a policy towards Uzbeks living abroad, and does not have a diaspora policy either. This does not mean that "what happens to Osh Uzbeks is of no interest to the Uzbekistani leadership", so the head of a research institute in Tashkent told me[124]. The fact that Uzbeks, especially young males, are the most likely recruits for underground movements such as Hizb-ut Tahrir and IMU is a serious cause of concern for Uzbekistani authorities. As a consequence, Uzbekistan maintains a form of informal control in cities like Osh through a network of informants among the local population. Overall, the lack of a formulation on the diaspora issue reflects two policy priorities. One the one hand the marginalization of Uzbeks abroad from political discourse is part of the stability and security discourse, which differentiates sharply between inside stability and outside disorder. Co-ethnics abroad in this are a disturbing complication as they tend to blur the inside/outside divide. Also, the lack of interest from the Uzbekistani side might well be part of tacit accords between the Central Asian states not to back each other's minorities. In the end, if Uzbeks in Osh are "expected to Kyrgyzify", Tajiks in Samarkand might be expected to do the same. This discussion of the perceptions of Uzbekistani Uzbeks of the "diaspora" was necessary to provide the context within which to locate Uzbekistan's foreign policy and especially its relations with its neighbours.

5.4.4. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks

Despite the potential for conflict over resources or territory[125], relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan throughout the 1990s have remained essentially good. However, tensions have mounted towards the end of the decade resulting in the straining of bilateral relations[126], and Uzbekistan's tightening of border controls. Causes for this have been the 16 February 1999 Tashkent bombing and the summer 1999 and 2000 incursions of Islamist militants -belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan- through Kyrgyz territory into Uzbekistan[127]. Blame fell on Kyrgyz authorities for failing to stop the militants and that country's weakness has been

[124]Interview with Arslan Joldashev, June 2003, Tashkent.
[125]For a brief review of border disputes in Central Asia see ICG (2002a). Thorny issues include territorial claims (each country has exclaves located within the other's territory) and controversies over the supply and payment of natural resources (gas and water).
[126]For an excellent study of the 1999-2000 Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border conflict see Nick Megoran's *The Border of Eternal Friendship?* (2002d).
[127]Naumkin (2003).

henceforth used to legitimise the closure of the border and the tightening of border policy. In the past four years reports of casualties at the border (with both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) due to shootings by police guards or accidental deaths on landmines, have become a common theme in the media of the region[128].

Resentment among cross-border communities is due both to the perception of the authorities to Kyrgyzify or Uzbekify the local population, and to the damage that border closure and a tight visa regime cause to shuttle trade. At a state level two sources of tension can be identified: territorial claims and energy-related disputes. There are seven enclaves in the Ferghana Valley, the most known and problematic of those being Sox and Shax-i-Mardan (belonging to Uzbekistan) and Vorux (Tajikistan). Besides the fact that enclaves are often home to people whose nationality is different from that of the state exerting sovereignty over the territory (Sox), the problem actually has more to do with the exploitation of natural resources and territorial delimitation. A further element of concern for Uzbekistan was that enclaves, especially Sox, could be used by militants of organizations such as the IMU as bases for incursions into Uzbekistani territory. At the moment Sox is a highly militarised area, where staying is virtually impossible and even transit (it is on the main route to the main centres of Batken province) is hampered. In February 2001 a secret memorandum was signed by the Uzbek prime minister U. Sultanov, and his Kyrygz counterpart, K. Bakiev, agreeing on a land swap. Uzbekistan would be given a land corridor to link Sox to the mainland, and in return Kyrgyzstan would be given a portion of land around the exclave of Barak[129]. The document was leaked to the press in Kyrgyzstan, and the prime minister was accused by the opposition and the public that this "sell off" of the country brought "unsatisfactory compensation"[130].

As Megoran's study of the border dispute shows, Uzbekistan's preferred tool has been a resort to power politics (closure of border post, posing of barbed wire along the boundary, police operations within Kyrgyz territory) and economic forms

[128]See for example Nazhmiddinova (2002), Mirsaidov (2002), Teshaev (2003), Sukohv (2002), Khabibov (2002b), Mirsaidov (2003).
[129]ICG (2002b.
[130]For an excellent discussion of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border conflict see Megoran (2002).

of pressure (cutting gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan) rather than mobilizing Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

5.4.5. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the "Leninabadi" faction

For the first half of the war (arguably until 1994) Uzbekistan played a significant and stabilising role in leading the opposing sides to the negotiating table. The move was not out of mere generosity, though. A crucial concern, detectable in some of president Karimov's documents, was the fear that territorial claims on ethnic basis would spread over to neighbouring targets, making the Uzbekistani cities of Samarkand and Bukhara (but also the province of Surkhandarya) the targets of Tajik revisionists[131]. Similar concerns over the possible spill-over of conflict into Uzbekistani territory were paramount in Tashkent's decision to side with Russia in brokering a cease fire and negotiating an end to the conflict. However, since 1994-1996 Uzbekistan's role in the country has become increasingly peripheral (Akiner, 2001) and the relations between the two countries have soared.

In partial compensation for the loss of what Tajiks regarded as their cultural centres (Samarkand and Bukhara), Tajikistan obtained the more developed northern area around the city of Khujand (located in the Ferghana Valley). *De facto* the northern city of Leninabad (as Khujand was been renamed in Soviet times) it continued to gravitate around Tashkent's orbit[132], from which it barely lies a hundred kilometres away. Being the most Russified (culturally), located in the most advanced area of the country (economically), and host to a significant Uzbek minority, it appeared sensible to the Soviet authorities to back the political elite from the north as their intermediary for ruling the country. This gave birth to an informal practice in Tajikistani politics: the political domination by northern elite which according to Olivier Roy has defined Tajikistan since 1945. Actually this practice has been recently greatly exaggerated. Despite the fact that recent reports, academic (Gretsky, 1995) and not (Human Rights Watch, 1998) tend to assume a complete domination

[131]For an example of this kind of views with extreme nationalistic tones mixed with a virulent anti-Uzbek rhetoric see the work of the otherwise well-respected Tajik academic Rakhim Masov (1991 and especially 1995).

[132]Akiner (2001) somehow qualifies the support the Leninabadis obtained from Uzbekistan, as this is Soviet times acted as pro-consul of Moscow. Sergey Gretsky instead considers the northerners as a mere appendix of Uzbekistan (1995).

of the Leninabadis. Shirin Akiner notes, by contrast, since the early seventies an agreement for power and resources distribution was in place between Leninabadi and southern (Kulyabi) political factions (2001).

As Olivier Roy notes (1997), it is worth recalling that in Tajikistani politics patronage and personal loyalties count more than political or ethnic affiliations. This meant, for example, that clans such as the Leninabadis or Kulyabi, Gharmis, Pamiris, were in fact political factions or power centres, where kinship criss-crossed blood ties and could instead comprise individuals belonging to different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. When Tajikistan became independent, a sudden and violent struggle to reshuffle the power arrangements and distribution took place, the faction of the then president Nabiev outplacing Leninabadis and Kulyabis from power. The conflict degenerated and other dimensions were added to the conflict (ie regionalism, role of Islam in political life, criminalization of politics, etc.).

Russia and Uzbekistan at this stage intervened to push the sides towards a cessation of hostilities and negotiated an agreement for power distribution. Although this was ultimately formalised in the 1997 Peace Accords, a power shift was already in place in 1994, with one southern faction (from Danghara, near Kulyab) headed by a former kolkhoz chair, Emomali Rakhmonov monopolising political and economic power. Following what was perceived as the "Kulyabization" of the country and its alignment with or reliance on Russia for support, Uzbekistan ceased to play a significant role in Tajikistani affairs (Akiner, 2001 p.48). The withdrawal did not last long, and Uzbekistan continued to play a less direct role in Tajikistan for a few years (1996-1998). These essentially consisted of a series of uprisings from February 1996 until November 1998 (February 1996, August 1997, October 1997, and November 1998) in the northern province of Leninabad/Sughd. Although these intrusions have been portrayed by the Tajikistani government as failed coups, it seems instead that more economic considerations were at the basis of these incursions[133]. Allegations from Dushanbe that Uzbekistan might be behind the intrusions (which involved the former prime minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov and especially the former Tajik army commander Mahmud Khudoyberdiev) have always been rejected by Tashkent.

[133]This, at least, seems to be the consensus of respondents from Khujand, Uzbeks and Tajiks alike, who see in those intrusions nothing more than activities related to smuggling (interviews conducted in August 2003).

What is relevant here is that in most cases troops have been reported to have passed through the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border and there (Uzbekistan) to have retreated. In any case collusion was required for troops to pass the border. Eventually Uzbekistan paid a price for this: when the IMU militants entered Uzbek territory, they did so from their Tajik bases (especially around Garm, in the Tavildera and Karategin valleys, then out of government control). That Tajikistani authorities closed an eye on those occasions can be interpreted as a vendetta for previous "rudeness".

After playing a direct role in Tajikistani politics for more than seventy years and contributing to stopping the civil war, relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have become increasingly strained. However, the Uzbek factor is of little help when one tries to make sense of the events. True, there is a large Uzbek minority in the north and that region is traditionally more Uzbekified and better connected with Uzbekistan than with the rest of the country. In addition Khudoyberdiev is Uzbek – ethnic Lakay actually. However, the clashes between the two neighbours should be seen through the lenses of power politics rather than as a manifestation of ethnic tensions. Despite the controversial and often tense relations between Tajikistan and Tajikistani Uzbeks on one side and Uzbekistan on the other, it is perhaps surprising to note that according to a recent survey (conducted by the author in 2003) a considerable minority of Uzbeks (about 40%) continue to imagine Tajikistan's future somehow connected with Uzbekistan.

5.4.6. Tashkent has ignored the call [from Uzbeks abroad], but... was anybody calling in the first place?

Theoretical models and field reports have suggested the possibility that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks might actually act as a "fifth column" of Uzbekistan – something which has raised understandable concern in that country. In an insightful study of Osh Uzbeks and their relation to political authority, Morgan Liu looks at their "discrimination and disempowerment" as leading motives behind their articulation of a "vision of an ideal authority and polity in discourses about their post-Soviet predicament" (2002 p.1). Uzbekistan's president is then idealised and "imagined" as a "benevolent despot", looking after his people (ibid., p.2). Osh Uzbeks "recognise the khan" in Islam Karimov. My study of members of political, economic, and cultural elites among southern Kyrgyzstani and northern Tajikistani Uzbeks qualifies Liu's picture.

Attitude toward Uzbekistan

Opinions among respondents towards Uzbekistan tend to show a rather disenchanted view of the neighbour. In some ways this is very similar to the views emerging from the study conducted in Uzbekistan showing a trend toward mutual disinterest. In Tajikistan seventy-three respondents out of one hundred and forty-seven (53%) consider Uzbekistan as a neighbour/neighbouring state/sovereign country. Thirty-five (25%) considered it as either their homeland (*rodina*), or the homeland of their ancestors (*rodina moykh predkov*). About fifteen (ca 9%) declined to express any opinion, whereas the remainder had more negative views of the neighbouring country.

With regard to the situation in Kyrgyzstan, the sample was smaller (fifty-four). Twenty-five respondents indicated that Uzbekistan to them is "a neighbour/-ing country". Sixteen on the other hand consider Uzbekistan as their (ethnic) homeland. Six respondents added other comments, some of which were remarkably negative ("we [in Kyrgyzstan] have democracy, they [in Uzbekistan] have paper democracy", "Uzbekistan is a dictatorship, a totalitarian state oppressing its own people"), and other more positive ("it is a rich country, which I respect", "borders do not have any meaning to me"). Respondents in the two case studies present similar type of responses among those who tend to consider Uzbekistan as nothing more than a neighbour. Only on rare occasions did respondents show enthusiasm toward Uzbekistan; perhaps more surprising is the lack of widespread criticism of the Uzbek authorities, (although this appears to confirm some of the findings of Morgan Liu's (2002) research on cross-border (Osh) Uzbeks and their views of authority.

However, it should not be overlooked that about one in four respondents has indicated Uzbekistan as his/her own homeland. The perceptions of Uzbekistani Uzbeks and Uzbeks abroad present some similarities. It should be noted that the more critical segment of the Uzbek population (toward Tashkent) can be found among young males (predominantly students, journalists, or teachers). Only about fifteen respondents expressed a less positive view of Uzbekistan. A common theme was the reference to Uzbekistan's "lack of hospitality" (*ochen' ne gostipriennoe gosudarstvo*) referring to the border policy and the visa regime. More open and critical comments emerged in the follow-up interviews. Here those more likely to

discuss the different sides of Uzbekistan's regional politics came from the younger generation and this was especially so in Kyrgyzstan. Incidents between Uzbek border guards and police and the latter's incursions in Kyrgyzstani territory are recurrent. Shootings and more or less accidental deaths at the border are relatively frequent and deeply felt by the local population. Most lament the impossibility of visiting relatives on the other side of the border, attending weddings or funerals. The necessity of acquiring a visa and therefore the expenses one would incur in going (flying in winter time, with a cost of around 80 USD for a return flight) to Bishkek have had an impact not only on the practicalities of living at the border, but on the perceptions of so doing.

5.6. How do you rate Uzbekistan's policy towards Uzbeks living in Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan?

	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
Positive	15.8	17.0
Negative	45.1	25.0
No difference	31.6	37.8
Don't know	7.5	20.2
Total	100.0	100.0

5.7. Does Uzbekistan defend the interests of its co-ethnics in Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan?

	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
Yes	12.6	13.4
No	63.7	69.5
Don't know	23.7	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0

5.8. Who should defend the interests of the Uzbek population?

	Tajikistan (%)	Kyrgyz Republic (%)
State institutions	47.0	56.6
Uzbekistani institutions	2.3	0
International organizations	2.3	8.0
Local Uzbek organizations	6.8	10.1
All Uzbeks living in the republic	12.1	5.0
All citizens of the republic	28.0	20.3
Other	1.5	0

Responses in the two countries again reflected a similar assessment of Uzbekistan's policy towards Uzbeks abroad. Although partially overlapping, the two questions address distinct issues: an overall evaluation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, and an opinion specifically focused on the extent to which Uzbekistan is seen to defend the interests of the Uzbek population living abroad. In both cases a positive assessment of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is rare (15% in Tajikistan and 17% in Kyrgyzstan). It is especially the case in Tajikistan that a negative assessment appears strong (45%). Uzbekistan's construction of Tajikistan as an "anti-model" against which Uzbekistan's development is measured probably plays a role in this (otherwise only 25% of respondents in Kyrgyzstan assesses Uzbekistan's regional policy negatively). Opinions become more homogenous when respondents are asked whether they think Uzbekistan is defending (in whatever way, political, economic, cultural) the interests of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A very strong majority (60-70%) rejects this idea. Local Uzbek associations report the systematic refusal by Uzbekistani authorities to intensify contacts with them. An Uzbek deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh noted with regret that "...we [the local branch of the UNCC] always invite him [Islam Karimov] to come and visit us; not only he never visits, but we never receive any reply either". A major cause of grievance among elite and non elites alike is Uzbekistan's refusal to open a consular office in southern Kyrgyzstan (a similar demand is made in northern Tajikistan).

A negative assessment of Uzbekistan and its policies is reflected also in the following question. Asked to indicate which institution(s) should address the demands, concerns, and interests of Uzbeks, Uzbekistan is indicated by a mere 2.3% in Tajikistan (no-one in Kyrgyzstan). What is surprising is that this is equal or less than the percentage of respondents indicating international organizations. About three out of four respondents by contrast indicate that it is the duty of all the citizens of the republic and also of state institutions to look after the interests of non titular groups.

5.4.7. Summary

Uzbekistan's record as regards its relations with its neighbours and with Uzbeks abroad is mixed. Relations with Kyrgyzstan have been substantially good,

particularly up until the end of the past decade, when land incursions from the Kyrgyz side of the Ferghana Valley from IMU militants into Uzbekistani territory have destabilised the relations between the two countries. Periodical tensions (typically when Kyrgyzstan introduced its own national currency replacing the Russian rouble in the early nineties, or when Uzbekistani police guards have violated Kyrgystan's sovereignty by entering its territory) have alternated with moments of calm. In addition border delimitation disputes and energy related controversies have contributed to strain the relations between the two countries, particularly those between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In light of the findings one can draw two conclusions. First, Uzbekistan has adopted a policy which radically differs from the one of countries such as Kazakhstan (Cummings, 1998) or the Russian Federation (Melvin, 1995, 1998, 2001). The rationale behind the adoption of such diaspora policies is different in the two states. Kazakhstan's interest in the diaspora was primarily aimed at re-establishing demographic superiority in the country, whereas the Russian diaspora has mainly been used as a tool in the domestic political debate. With regard to the Uzbek diaspora, by contrast, an alternative consideration has dominated Uzbekistan's agenda: the separation from the instability at its door by establishing an island of stability. It is possible to argue that Uzbekistan's ideology of national independence has aimed more at the self-reinforcing of the ruling elite than at the aggrandissement of the Uzbek nation, which appears instrumental to the ideological design.

Second, Uzbekistan's policy towards its neighbours has focused more on territorial and resource issues rather than ethnic ones. Immigration of Uzbeks from Tajikistan, for instance, has not been preferred to that of Tajiks from the same area. In fact both have been obstracised. Land mines affect mostly Uzbeks as they are concentrated in border regions. Shuttle trade is also affected by a visa regime and familiar links and communications in general have often been severed by the lack of an Uzbekistani consulate in southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan.

The Uzbek elites in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, however, do not seem to look to Tashkent for inspiration or support (Tashkent does not consider official Uzbek associations as one of the channels to deal with neighbouring countries). When I

asked the Jogorku Kenesh deputy Fattakhov if he thought that Karimov had forgotten about Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, his immediate reply was:

"Karimov never forgot about us. In fact, he never remembered"[134].

5.5. Conclusion

Findings suggest that while an approach focusing on the political opportunity structure offers a convincing account of the institutional – domestic as well as international - environment within which Uzbek mobilization has taken place, a focus on both elite and non elite perspectives has allowed me to compare and contrast the opportunities/constraints with the perceptions thereof. In this respect the cases of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are similar. In both cases policies have been crafted in a way to prevent an institutional divide between the favoured titular group and marginalised others. However, in both cases Uzbeks have reported practices of discrimination, though occasional rather than regular ("tendencies"). This of course does not make them less significant, but confirms that at least at a policy level the two countries have displayed an effort to integrate minority groups. Crucial to this regard has been the agency of the two presidents, and particularly Akaev's in Kyrgyzstan. As argued in chapter 3, structure and agency are relational concepts, so that "someone's structure is some else's agency". This well illustrates the situation where a study of Uzbek mobilization incorporates presidential agency within the POS (constraining or enabling Uzbek mobilization), whereas for example a study of Kyrgyzstan's post-Soviet transformation would look at Akaev as a clear example of human agency.

A second finding regards the vehicles for channelling dissent and demands. These have not developed, and minority groups have been left without political representation. Ethnic parties are banned, and little minority representation exists in government structures at both central and local level. The only officially recognised and legitimate (from the state's perspective) vehicle for mobilization is represented by national-cultural centres, which are top-down organizations.

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[134]Interview with Mr Fattakhov, Bishkek, June, 2003.

Finally a study of Uzbekistan's attitude towards Uzbeks abroad shows that the triadic nexus model is of limited use when accounting for kin-state and ethnic minority in Central Asia. Rather than taking on the role of the ethnic patron Uzbekistan has progressively developed a security-centred approach to security combined with an emphasis on state over nation-building, thereby sidelining Uzbek co-ethnics abroad from the public discourse. This in the end has proved stabilizing as an element of almost certain tension – Uzbekistan's intereference with the domestic affairs of a neighbouring country – has gradually waned after Tashkent's retreat from Tajikistan's civil war and the securitization of its regional and border policy. In Central Asia, Brubaker's tradic nexus seems to have developed into a dyadic one, where the third party has called itself off the game.

CHAPTER 6
Framing the "Uzbek question"

The previous chapters have shown that an analysis of the structural factors offers valuable insight in explaining the emergence or absence of mobilization. The political opportunity structure and the structural preconditions have significantly shaped the course of Uzbek mobilization. A discussion of the Soviet legacies and of the political opportunity structure suggests that Uzbeks in both countries have faced significant constraints both in terms of the form of their political participation and also the possibility of voicing their demands and having them met.

However, what structuralist explanations do not provide is convincing evidence to make sense of variations in forms and strategies of mobilization *across* and *within* cases. In my study of Uzbek political mobilization I found Jamilya Ukudeeva-Freeman's concept of a "mobilising idea" ("an action-oriented set of beliefs that unifies people around itself for a common goal. [It] inspires people for action, legitimates leaders' actions, and expresses conviction about how things should be", 2003) a useful analytical tool to explore the extent to which an idea or a set of ideas are shared by members of a group as well as their readiness to mobilize around that very same idea. A mobilizing idea is both an *action plan* and also a *solution to problems* (which makes it similar to Gorenburg's understanding of cultural frames, 2003). The movement would be over, Ukudeeva-Freeman contends, when leaders can no longer recruit people because their ideas and goals do not resonate among the people.

What needs be taken into account is therefore (1) the extent to which the movement (particularly its leaders) is able to create an idea or set of ideas among its target population that it has been subject to past injustices, or that taking part to the movement is worthwhile because of future positive payouts, and (2) the extent to which the interpretation of ideas, perceptions and beliefs ("frames") resonate across the group itself and are appropriated.

In this chapter I also develop and apply to the study of Uzbek mobilization the concept of a "de-mobilizing idea". By "de-mobilizing idea" I refer to a "set of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes which shape the direction of mobilization towards integration with the institutions and other groups of the country of residence, de facto going against the commonly held expectation that political mobilization is in its own nature confrontational with authorities". The concept also emphasises how ideas and frames are quintessentially relational. The same set of beliefs can simultaneously act as a powerful "mobilizer" in one direction, and demobilize the very same group in a different respect. The case of Islam and the relation between religion and nationality experienced from the Uzbek population illustrates well the way in which mobilizing and de-mobilizing ideas are intertwined and operate: on the one hand Islam constitutes a potentially powerful mobilizing idea (as religion), while at the same time representing a constraining force for mobilization along national lines (as anti-national or supra-national ideology).

As Ukudeeva-Freeman (2003) and Gorenburg (2003) have shown in their research, these "visions" (mobilizing ideas) do not come out of nowhere. Because they need to be popularized among the target population, they need to be familiar to resonate. "To be successful, nationalist leaders had to frame their demands in language and imagery that could resonate with the population" (Gorenburg, 2003 p.12). This means taking into full account the legacy of seventy and more years of Soviet political order, which throughout the twentieth century "decisively moulded the perceptions, beliefs, and identities of minority ethnic group members" (ibid.). The successful nationalist leaders would be those who crafted their message in a way to (cor)respond to the political ideas of the population.

The scope of this chapter is first to explore the type of ideas which throughout the post-independence period have emerged in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and second to determine which among these have resonated across the group. Drawing on qualitative interviews and specific questions asked as part of a broader survey among Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, the following issues are discussed:

- What type of (mobilizing) ideas are developed by the Kyrgyzstani/Tajikistani Uzbek leadership?

- How are they received? Are they appropriated by and do they resonate across the larger Uzbek community?

In short, how is the Uzbek question framed?

The chapter argues that a mobilizing idea is more likely to emerge in a pre-conflict environment, while the legacy of conflict favours the emergence of frames emphasizing the search for stability and moderation. Additionally it is shown that political mobilization is likely to emerge following the emergence of a resonating mobilizing idea. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one and two discuss the emergence and resonance of a set of mobilizing or de-mobilizing ideas in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan respectively, and section three looks comparatively at the findings and highlights the similarities and discrepancies between the two cases.

6.1 Kyrgyzstan

6.1.1. The legacy and memory of the 1990 Osh conflict

The Osh conflict framed the form and the content of political relations between ethnic communities in the country and the way that these have contributed to political life ever since. In the aftermath of the conflict those informal organizations more actively involved in the riots, namely "Osh Aimagy" (among the Kyrgyz) and "Adolat" (Uzbeks), were disbanded and ethnically based political movements banned from public life. However, the events have had a different impact on the two communities. On the one hand there is no organization among the Uzbek population that explicitly advances Uzbek political interests in the shape of an ethnic political party or equivalent (ie associations of Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan and the Baltics lobbying for influence). The two main Uzbek cultural organizations (the Uzbek national-cultural centre and the Society of Uzbeks) portray themselves and their programmes as "cultural" and explicitly "non political"[135]. On the other hand, the situation appears remarkably different in the case of political parties such as the nationalist Asaba party (Party of National Renewal), one of the oldest in the country, as well as Kyrgyz language publications, where nationalist-oriented newspapers (i.e.

[135]Activists and leading figures of the Uzbek National-Cultural Centre and of the Society of Uzbeks systematically maintain that the organization's goal is exclusively related to cultural preservation and has nothing to do with political matters.

Tribuna, Agym, or Asaba) have circulated relatively undisturbed since independence. The situation within the Uzbek community may have changed in recent years, as a new party was established in the southern town of Jalalabat in 1999: the "Party of National Unity and Concord"[136]. Although the leaders of this party[137] vigorously deny it being an Uzbek party, the leaders themselves admit that 95% of its membership is in fact Uzbek.

6.1.2. The missing frame? Autonomy for Uzbeks

The 1990 Osh conflict did not bode well for the integrity of the Kyrgyzstan SSR. Requests for land swaps with Uzbekistan (with Uzgen been ceded to the neighbouring country) or even autonomy if not outright secession escalated before and in the immediate aftermath of the tragic events in June that year[138]. The fact that the entire Uzbek population reside on the Kyrgyz side of the Ferghana Valley, and in some border districts constitute the majority, meant an autonomist or separatist scenario was not totally unrealistic. Despite emerging before the conflict and being promoted by the Adolat organization, autonomy as a mobilizing frame soon faded away, both under the stabilizing role of Uzbekistan's president Karimov, and accordingly, the perception of the local Uzbek population that their present and presumable future would lie within the boundaries of Kyrgyzstan. Pragmatism certainly prevailed, but conversations with local Uzbeks who experienced these events also show a negative connotation associated with the very concept of "autonomy". The autonomist issue has virtually disappeared from the agenda of Uzbek organizations and more broadly from the Uzbek mindset. Outright secession has virtually turned into a "taboo" topic, but a similar fate was reserved for autonomy as well. The number of Uzbeks who openly support the thesis of institutionalizing Uzbek autonomy - and autonomy would then be territorial rather than cultural - appears marginal at best. The following are commonly held views on the topic from members of the Uzbek community:

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[136]See chapter 7 for more on this.
[137]Interviews with Mr. Azamjan Azimov, the party's founder, and Mr Abildjan Abildov, the Osh representative and former head of the UNCC (July 2003).
[138]Pravda (1990) and Sovetskaya Kirghizia (1990) quoted in Asankanov (1996).

"We do not need autonomy. Acknowledging our cultural demands is enough. Autonomy is dangerous. Autonomy leads to secession."

One should note, however, that although in the early 1990s the Uzbek population had not mobilized en masse and had provided the incumbent with constant loyal support this does not foreclose alternative future developments such as an increase in mobilizational activity or withdrawal of support for the authorities should failure to address Uzbek grievances continue.

6.1.3. Memory as mobilizing idea

As Faranda and Nolle have shown in a recent study on ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan, relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, though not tense, are still marked by some degree of suspicion and each group considers the other as the "significant other" (2003). Fear that the conflict may repeat itself appears to be a constant theme and a real concern for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks:

"This is still an open wound in the relations between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz". "Remembering the 1990 conflict does not help". "The memory of such events is very painful". "What happened in 1990 has defined Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations for the following decade". "Uzbek behaviour has been significantly affected from what happened in 1990. Uzbeks do not do politics anymore". "Uzbeks are afraid of politics now. Uzbeks fear something like that [the conflict] may repeat itself."

The memory of the Osh conflict represents a frame that has greatly resonated across the Uzbek community. What is distinctive about this frame is that it acted as powerful mobilizer in favour of the political incumbent, President Akaev. Akaev emerged as a compromise candidate on the Kyrgyzstani political scence in late 1990 whose agenda focused on the introduction of political and economic reforms. What is more relevant here, is that Akaev made of the necessity of preserving inter-ethnic harmony (advancing a moderate nationalising agenda without alienating ethnic minorities) the cornerstone of his policy agenda. The slogan 'Kyrgyzstan is our common home' is the well-known catch-phrase.

To the eyes of minority groups and Uzbeks in particular, Akaev has represented the guarantee of stability on the one hand and a sort of political insurance that would prevent nationalist-oriented Kyrgyz from coming to power on the other.

In the absence of Uzbek candidates and in light of a new minority status, the Akaev option emerged as a "relative gain" for Uzbeks. Concessions to ethnic minorities (i.e. veto on land legislation proposals from nationalist organizations, pressure for a more inclusive language law and introduction of Russian as an official language in 2000, establishment of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan have played a major role in Akaev's policy of maintaining ethnic stability in the country, and in return the Uzbek leadership has never concealed its support for the current president.

Even more populist figures among the Uzbek leadership such as the Osh-based businessman and politician Davron Sabirov have through the years softened their inflammatory tones, re-directing criticism towards the competing Uzbek organization (UNCC). In my research I could hardly detect any criticism of the president coming from the Uzbek population:

"We support Akaev". "Akaev has maintained stability in the country".

Further comments illustrate how support for the incumbent goes hand in hand with the need to distance oneself from the "opposition", understood by Uzbeks as "Kyrgyz nationalist opposition". This implies a rejection not just of the ideas advanced from opposition movements, but more crucially the rejection of the very idea that there may be a legitimate opposition to Akaev.

"We have nothing to do with the opposition". "Akaev may be weak but is better than others [Kyrgyz nationalists]; What happens if Akaev goes? Who knows who will come after him?"

From these comments it is possible to detect two underlying sentiments beneath the veil of support: support exists because of a lack of alternatives and the serious concern for the future successor to his post. Akaev, in this sense, is not supported for the success of his policies (most in fact recognize him being a rather "weak president who does not have real power to implement his decisions"), but is preferred because of the lack of an alternative (the lesser of two evils?)[139]. The frequently asked question "Who will come after Akaev?" reveals strong concern that a more nationalist-oriented political figure might emerge and replace the current president.

[139]Khamidov (2000).

In this sense, Akaev represents an inevitable choice for the Uzbek population in the south. For this reason the frustrations and grievances among the Uzbek population are often left aside when it comes to the political domain. Indeed, the concern for the prospects of inter-ethnic stability has shaped a self-reinforcing myth among Uzbeks that a future president might necessarily be a nationalist. This has de facto mobilized Uzbeks behind the current president and paradoxically demobilized them.

Fear and stability have emerged as concerns of paramount importance to the Uzbek population and have constituted a powerful mobilizing idea(s), in the way Ukudeeva-Freeman conceptualized it. What makes the frame peculiar, however, is the direction towards which this mobilization operates. The following section illustrates the way a particular form of mobilization takes place among the local Uzbek community by reference to an Uzbek mahalla in Osh.

"Mahalla mobilization"

Though representatives of the UNCC maintain that their organization is strictly cultural, they concede that during elections they engage in electoral campaigning ("agitatsiya"). Electoral mobilization takes place on two occasions: parliamentary and presidential elections. As to the latter, the Uzbek community has traditionally supported the incumbent, President Akaev. It did so in the early 1990s being convinced that he could deliver protection of the Uzbek language and culture in the face of a perceived rising and aggressive ethnic Kyrgyz nationalism (Huskey, 2002). Following Akaev's increasingly authoritarian turn, there have been signs that this faith is being eroded and that the Uzbek community is starting to develop an "agenda of its own" (ICG, 2002c) that may not necessarily overlap with that of the state leadership. Publicly, however, Uzbek representatives have never failed to provide Akaev with statements of support. During the electoral campaign for presidential elections in 2000, the two Uzbek cultural centres in Osh issued a joint declaration of support for the incumbent, inviting the Uzbek population to express their preference for Askar Akaev in the forthcoming elections[140]. With regard to parliamentary elections, given that the leading figures of the two centres are deputies at the Parliament in Bishkek, one cannot help noting that electoral mobilization equates to

[140]Kabar (2000).

self-promotion by the Uzbek organizations, who draw on their resources to campaign. Critical to electoral mobilization are Uzbek mahallas.

Mahallas, the neighbourhood communities where Uzbeks (and Tajiks) typically tend to live, play an important role in the process of mobilization of the Uzbek community. This role is largely informal, and mostly derives from practice. Ba'rno-opa, a local Uzbek woman living in an Osh mahalla, illustrated the way "mahalla mobilization" works with reference to the 2000 parliamentary elections. Would-be deputies are introduced by representatives of the Uzbek cultural organizations to the elders of mahallas (aksakal) and ask for permission to meet the neighbourhood community. Although the leading figures of the mahalla can on paper refuse to present a candidate to the community, this is an unlikely event. Typically a meeting is arranged where the whole mahalla gathers to listen to and meet with the candidate. What is interesting in this regard is not so much the technical aspect of the meeting itself, but the possible options that are available to the members of the mahalla and ultimately to the Uzbek organizations as well. Under elections three situations can occur: no Uzbek candidate; presence of an Uzbek candidate and non Uzbek candidates; multiple Uzbek candidacy. In the first and third case the outcome is similar, as the community does not express open support for any of the candidates. In practice, freedom of choice is left to the voters, although personal links, favours or 'incentives' may tilt the balance towards one or other candidate. The second case is more interesting, as it shows that beneath the surface mobilization along ethnic lines plays a role in electoral politics. In the case of presidential elections, however, the situation differs. Because the language requirements for the candidate require him/her to pass a Kyrgyz language test, this makes it particularly hard for an ethnic Uzbek to run for president, let alone have any chance of success. Support for the "second best option" becomes inevitable.

6.1.4. Memory as de-mobilizing idea

Concern about potential destabilization of inter-ethnic relations appears to have played against the decision to be more active politically and more confrontational in making demands to state authorities.

"Why should we get involved in politics? What difference does it make? Uzbek problems should be solved within the community, not from outside. Uzbek themselves can solve them. People are afraid that by becoming active in politics, political struggles become a matter of us against them, of Kyrgyz against Kyrgyz. You see, they struggle between themselves nowadays (northern versus southern regions), but as soon as we get involved, they will all unite and divert their problems against us. This is why during the Aksy riots, we told our people; Do not go there, stay home. Don't go, they will blame us".

Fear of becoming involved combined with political apathy or general distrust for politics appear paradoxically to have paid off more than active political engagement in the Uzbek case, insofar as the state leadership is perceived to "protect" ethnic minorities, or at least not to "harm" them. An often mentioned reason for the lack of mobilization, or even interest in politics from the Uzbek population is "Uzbek mentality"' (*mentalitet*), indicated by about one in four respondents (23.3%) as a cause of the perceived Uzbek political inaction. The term refers to the social conservatism of the Uzbek population, which seems to entail a sort of passivity in public life. *"Ne meshay!"* (do not get involved!) seems to be a self-imposed order that Uzbeks give themselves. Uzbeks do not appear keen to participate actively in public life. There are of course reasons which have nothing to do with politics: state employment, a job in politics or the security services (e.g. army, secret services) do not appear to appeal to Uzbeks. The salary is much lower than that of a job in the trade sector. This clearly raises the question as to whether it is possible to speak of marginalization or even discrimination of minorities in some sectors of the state structures, or if instead Uzbeks operate some form of "self-censorship", as one respondent put it to me. On the other hand, Uzbeks claim that employment in the army, judiciary, and secret services are "off limits" to them.

> "They [Kyrgyz] think we are all [members of] Hizb-ut Tahrir!" "They do not trust us, they think we can not be loyal. But we citizens of Kyrgyzstan, this is our homeland!"

There is actually a creeping suspicion among Kyrgyz, that underground militant Islamic movements may be particularly popular with Uzbeks. This does create a serious problem of mutual trust between the two peoples. While the sentiment is not

widespread (Faranda and Nolle, 2003), I did occasionally come across instances of "ethnic othering":

> "You should not be surprised if you find an Uzbek working in the army and his brother a member of Hizb-ut Tahrir. Then what do we do? What does he do? Do you think he would give up his brother for the state?"

The question of mutual trust and loyalty is crucial for inter-ethnic stability. As long as minorities feel unwelcome and distrusted they will unwillingly (perhaps as last resort) contribute to the formation of state institutions. In turn, as long as members of the titular group perceive even a shadow of ambiguity in terms of loyalty from the minority, it is unlikely that it will ever concede control of positions at a senior level.

One of the possible explanations for the overall "passivity" or "lack of activism" lies in the lack of a widespread perception of marginalization (e.g. lack of political representation, inadequacies in cultural protection – language, education) to be articulated into an effective mobilizing idea. It seems, on the contrary, that grievances remained just that. A local (Kyrgyz) analyst crudely put it as follows:

> "They [Uzbeks] complain, but what do they do? If they think there is something wrong, then why do they sit and do nothing?"

A widespread sense of frustration has recently emerged among southern Kyrgyz due to the fact that, despite sharing common grievances and perceptions of being "left out" from the redistribution of power by the northern clans, Uzbeks and southern Kyrgyz have failed to coalesce their efforts to bring about political change[141]. The unfolding of events that led to the incidents in Aksy (Jalalabat province) in early 2002[142] illustrates well the stance that Uzbeks have taken vis-à-vis the domestic political process. Uzbeks tend to view Kyrgyzstani politics as a quintessentially "(intra-)Kyrgyz affair", in which Uzbeks – a minority group and without clan ties traditionally shaping local politics – are increasingly marginalised. The 2002 Aksy events have contributed to make this covinction even more entrenched in Uzbek

[141]I am grateful to Almaz Kalet for discussing this point in length with me.
[142]ICG (2002c).

political imagination. In March 2002 Kyrgyz from the southern regions gathered the town of Aksy to protest against the arrest of the Jogorku Kenesh deputy Azimbek Beknazarov, who had previously demanded the resignation of the country leadership guilty of having conceded parts of Kyrgyz territory to foreign countries through secret agreements[143]. The protest turned into a series of riots that left a dozen people dead and eventually showed the depth of the political rift between northern and southern Kyrgyzstan. A striking absence from the demonstrations was that of the Uzbek population. While issues of state sovereignty may have not ranked high in the priorities of the local Uzbek communities, more concerned about more immediate issues such as language and education, for southern Kyrgyz the protests were not simply about the arrest of Beknazarov, but about a perception of unfair distribution of resources and represenation between northern and southern areas of the country. What happened was that Uzbeks were advised by leading members of the community against taking part in demonstrations[144], as doing so would have heightened ethnic tensions. What was feared was not so much the fact of protesting per se, but that Uzbek protest would have been used as a way of soothing tensions between Kyrgyz by refocusing the attention on "Uzbek disloyal behaviour". The lack of participation was not without consequences however, as interviews with local Kyrgyz in the south pointed to the disillusionment towards the local Uzbeks, seen as a 'fifth column' not of the Republic of Uzbekistan, but of the Akaev regime! What the Aksy events show is that lack of Uzbek protest is not a product of structural passivity of the Uzbek population, but a strategic calculation by the Uzbek leaders about the impact of their actions.

6.1.5. Are Uzbeks a diaspora? Soviet frames and discourses of integration

Chapter 4 has shown that Uzbeks possess a strong sense of common belonging to the ethno-national group. Data presented in the same chapter also suggest an equally strong degree of attachment to the state. Whether out of resignation or genuine support, Uzbeks have accepted their condition as citizens of Kyrgyzstan. This also emerged from the extent of the appropriation of the frame adopted by the Uzbek

[143]Ibid.

[144]Interviews with activists of Uzbek organizations in Osh and Jalalabat (June and July 2003).

community to define itself vis-à-vis the state. Uzbek presence was articulated not as a temporary presence, but as a permanent one.

In order to understand the way Uzbeks imagine themselves and their role in Kyrgyzstan, I explored the following set of questions. First, respondents were asked to express their opinion as to whether or not they perceive themselves as constituting a national minority. Subsequently, they were given a series of options from which they could choose the label that would best represent the community of belonging (i.e. national minority, diaspora, titular nation, historical (indigenous) nation[145], ethnic community, other). Finally, respondents were asked whether the label elicits positive or negative feelings. In the follow-up interviews I returned to some of the key issues that emerged from the survey data and discussed them further, specifically the understanding of the concept of diaspora, and more generally the significance of the group's self-categorization.

A plurality of respondents (45.5%) rejected the idea that the Uzbek community might be categorized as a national minority, whereas a slightly lower percentage seemed instead to share this thesis (40.2%), with one in six respondents undecided (14.4%). The label national minority is, with large exceptions, refused by representatives of the Uzbek community, arguing that this label applies to "very small groups, of a few thousands people or even less". National minority also implicitly refers to a diminished status with which Uzbeks find it difficult to reconcile themselves to, especially in areas of compact Uzbek settlement in the south. Contrary to the issue of the use of the term diaspora (see following paragraph), the question of whether or not Uzbeks do represent a national minority is extremely controversial and raises a series of perplexities among the titular group:

"They tell you [me] and us [Kyrgyz] that they are not a national minority. They say they have always been here, which is true, and that they have the same rights as Kyrgyz. They say they do not want quotas or any particular treatment of favour. Then they go to the OSCE and start saying that they are a national minority, that they are discriminated. Why do they do that?"

[145]I did not insert this type of identification in my pilot study in Bishkek, but it emerged from my initial conversations with local Uzbeks that referred to themselves using this expression (istoricheskaya natsiya). As the concept appears quite vaguely undefined, I further inquired about how I should understand it, and it later emerged that the meaning of this should be "indigenous".

Referring to local Uzbeks as a "diaspora/diasporic community" is considered more or less a term of abuse or, at best, as a pejorative term. When elicited on the topic, respondents overwhelmingly rejected any association between the Uzbek community and the label diaspora (only 3.3% of the sample considers Uzbeks to be a diasporic community). One in four respondents (23.6%) assigns the label a negative connotation, more or less the same proportion of the sample is indifferent to the question (25.5.%), and one in three (36.4%) does not have any opinion in this regard. One in six associates a positive meaning to the term diaspora (14.5). This does not mean much per se. I then explored what meaning respondents attach to the term, in order to understand the rationale behind the massive rejection of the term "Uzbek diaspora" (which I also tended to use in earlier stages of my research[146]). This overwhelmingly negative attitude toward the term is not well captured from survey data, but the follow-up interviews seem to give a better grasp of the extent to which Uzbeks do not wish to be identified as such (a mere 3.3.% did so). On no occasion, in individual interviews, did I find an Uzbek willing to consider his/her community of belonging as diasporic. Reactions tended to include comments such as the following:

> "We are not a diaspora! Nobody should refer to Uzbeks as diaspora. We are no diaspora, we did not arrive from anywhere. We are not like Germans or Koreans. They are small peoples, we are more than a million."

Diasporic communities and the idea of trans-national communities with links both in the state of residence and in distant areas have become more "acceptable" in recent years. This does not seem to apply to the post-Soviet space, where terminology remains not only politically charged, but firmly rooted in Soviet understandings of nationalities. This appears clearly when seeking to explore the meanings and perceptions associated with the term diaspora. Typically, respondents had difficulties to explain what one should understand by the concept. However, they were able to provide plenty of examples of diasporic communities, such as the Chechens, Koreans, Poles, and Germans. These were not mere examples, but references to what in the Stalinist period were considered (and on this basis deported) "enemy peoples"

[146]I am grateful to Alisher Khamidov for making me more aware of the implications of the use of the term with regard to Osh Uzbeks.

(read: anti-Soviet and disloyal)[147]. What made things worse from the Uzbek perspective, was that these peoples were small in size and lacked a key pre-requisite for aspiring to status and territory (and the resources and prestige associated with the claim to national territories): indigenousness. Similar considerations were made with regard to the term minority (10.7% of respondents referred to the Uzbek community as such). The fact that a few miles away from the border Uzbeks constituted the titular nation only accentuated the sensitivity of the question, which was clear about more than just terminology.

More marginal percentages emerged for other answers, among which were diaspora and ethnic community (7.4%)[148]. What appears to be the most popular form of self-categorization is "historical nation" (67.2%). I came across this term *(istoricheskaya natsiya)* during the explorative phase of my research, and in particular during my visit to Bishkek. On the basis of an overwhelming rejection of the label diaspora or even national minority from the Uzbek population, I asked my respondents what term they would use to define the (status of the) Uzbek population in the country. Historical nation is used as synonymous for indigenous (*korennoi*): this fits well with what said above about the ideas that Uzbeks attach to the term diaspora. The ideas underlying the concept (that Kyrgyzstani's territory is as Uzbek as much as it is Kyrgyz or belonging to other indigenous populations) stands in stark contrast to attempts from some nationalist elements in the administration to pass legislation (later vetoed by Akaev) that would favour ethnic Kyrgyz in land ownership thereby implying that Kyrgyzstani territory is first and foremost Kyrgyz land (Spector, 2004 p.12).

6.1.6. "Millatchilik xaram" [149]

Religion was not erased during Soviet times, but survived in disguised forms. In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse Islam provided one of the possible identity trajectories for the local population. Other factors, less related to concerns with mankind's destiny and to more earthly factors such as economic collapse, crisis in

[147]On the deported peoples of the Soviet Union see Hirsch (2005).
[148]Other results include "titular nation" (4.9%) and "other" (6.6%).
[149]Within Islam codes of behaviour are divided into haram (forbidden, spelt xaram in Uzbek) and halal (allowed).

the social fabric and political repression, contributed to the rise in significance of Islam not as a matter of private faith, but as a political project. As far as Central Asia is concerned, a variant of Islam was used by two groups in particular: the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Hizb-ut Tahrir[150]. Membership of such organizations arises from religious principles, and not out of common ethnic bonds, which are transcended by the Islamic faith.

The relational side of the Islamic frame lies in the simultaneous mobilizing potential as a non-national frame as well as a de-mobilizing frame for mobilization along ethnic lines. Chapter 4 has shown that religion and nationality constitute strong foci of allegiance for local Uzbeks. Given a choice, Uzbeks tend to opt for religious identification. This is particularly significant for those Uzbeks with a high religious sentiment, as is the case of those living in the Ferghana Valley, an area where religious sentiment appear particularly strong, at least compared to the rest of Central Asia. Local reports have repeatedly noted the strength of religion as a form of collective identification. This is not exclusive to the local population, but for the purposes for this study the impact that Islam has on local Uzbeks is of particular relevance. Should religion rather than ethnicity continue to be the primary form of identification, the chances for local Uzbeks to mobilize along ethnic lines would appear strongly reduced.

> "Being Muslim is a million times more important than being Uzbek."

As the conversation took place in Russian, the editor of 'Demos Times (Osh) Makhmud Kazakbaev could have choosen a different term to convey the same message. However the deliberate choice of the term xaram (haram), of Arabic origins, immediately pointed to the irrelevance of national differences within Islam. Mr Kazakbaev's comment captures well the sentiments of the Uzbek population.

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[150]In the early 1990s two other organizations emerged and gained rapidly popularity: the Party of Islamic Renaissance (at all-Union level), and Adolat, in Uzbekistan. Adolat was soon banned by the Karimov administration, whereas the PIR soon fragmented along national lines, and continues to exist in Tajikistan only (Naumkin, 2003).

6.1.7. "Uzbeks under siege"? The use of nationalist frames during the 2000 parliamentary campaign

"UZing haksan,
UZing halksan,
UZing mezon –
Mening Halkim!"[151]

The slogan above was used by the Uzbek businessman Davron Sabirov during the 2000 parliamentary electoral campaign in the city of Osh. While the message is no more or less threatening than any other populist slogan, what caused alarm at the time was the style of the electoral campaign[152]. This sparked wide-scale protests and heightened tensions between ethnic groups in the south of the country where Sabirov's organization is based and where he was campaigning. The slogan, with the letters "U" and "Z" of the word "uzing" (you yourselves, in Uzbek) in capital closely reminded to the word Uzbek, with some even seeing a reference to Uzbekistan, from where Sabirov was reported to be receiving money and political support. These two allegations have always remained unsubstantiated. None the less the question of the political backing which Sabirov received from Uzbekistan was a matter of dispute throughout the entire 1990s.

Regardless of the origins of Mr. Sabirov's funding, what is less subject to dispute (Sabirov himself openly admits it) is the cross-border links that he has maintained with officials in the local administration and the gas sector in Andijan (it is useful to recall that Sabirov himself chairs the Osh branch of the company KyrgyzGas). When Uzbekistan periodically interrupted the provision of gas to Kyrgyzstan (this has happened more or less regularly from 1999 onwards, possibly in retaliation to the alleged incompetence and lack of effectiveness of Kyrgyzstani authorities to prevent IMU militants from entering Uzbekistani territory), gas supplies were re-activated within a few days in some areas of town after Sabirov's intervention with "acquaintances and friends"[153] in Andijan. Although this is something Sabirov has never kept secret, some Kyrgyz resent the fact that Sabirov

[151]"You yourselves are right, you yourselves are the people, you yourselves are the scale – my people!"
[152]Megoran (2000c and 2000d).
[153]Interview with D. Sabirov, July 2003.

was all too quick to provide gas to Uzbek-inhabited areas of town, leaving other districts still without supply.

In 2000 Mr. Sabirov campaigned in the electoral district no. 34 in the north-eastern outskirts of Osh, known among the locals as the Amir Temur district, a deeply impoverished area, almost entirely inhabited by Uzbeks. Mr. Sabirov's candidacy was withdrawn for months by the electoral authorities as he was taken to court for allegedly inciting ethnic hatred. The spark that initiated the controversy was a brief electoral advertisement broadcast on the local TV station Osh TV. The broadcast staged the following: a man dressed with the traditional Uzbek hat was seen being mobbed and robbed by a group of people riding horses and wearing the black and white Kyrgyz hat (kalpak). The metaphor of Uzbeks being attacked from Kyrgyz did not require a sophisticated interpretation. Towards the end of the programme one could hear a voice reading Mr Sabirov's electoral slogan. As Mr Sabirov was taken to court, Osh TV was briefly suspended and Mr Sabirov's candidacy withdrawn (only to be re-admitted, suspended again and finally re-admitted). Davron Sabirov eventually won 62% of votes in his district and was elected (Megoran, 2000a and 2000b).

Mr. Sabirov's electoral campaign did not come as a total surprise to the local population. From 1997 to 2000 Davron Sabirov had systematically framed the Uzbek question in nationalistic terms, as many Uzbeks and himself openly acknowledge. Continuous references to Uzbekistan and proposals to shift the script to Latin, for example, were not viewed favourably by many even within the Uzbek community. The editor of Jalalobod Tongi newspaper (the Dawn of Jalalabat) dismissed Mr Sabirov's campaign as "sheer nationalism and populism. Mr Sabirov represents himself and no-one else in the Uzbek community"[154]. What matters here is the role that the style and content of Mr Sabirov's political ambitions had on inter-ethnic relations in town. The framing of the Uzbek question in a way that heightened tensions (playing the nationalist card) was a cornerstone of his electoral campaign. This phase started in 1996 when Mr Sabirov was essentially ousted from the UNCC and established his own separate organization, and culminated in 2000, when he was elected to the Jogorku Kenesh.

[154]Jalalabat, 11 July 2003.

This brief, though tense, phase marked a departure from the calming down of tones following the inward turn of Uzbekistan's foreign policy in the mid-1990s and the vocal support of local Uzbeks for the Akaev administration. What happened then was a "bifurcation" of Uzbek voices, with the official Uzbek national-cultural centre presenting itself as moderate and openly pro-government, and the other (Mr Davran Sabirov's) "closer to the people than to those in power", as he put it to me. Through a series of moves Sabirov sought to play on some open wounds and other themes dear to the Uzbek community:

- the naming of the new organization: Society of Uzbeks as opposed to national-cultural centre. The decision of the official centre to opt for a denomination which many Uzbeks see as appropriate for Koreans or Russians, but not for themselves (a typical comment being: 'small nationalities or diasporas need national-cultural centers, not us. We are not a minority. We are the majority here!');
- the emphasis on the importance of (cultural) links with Uzbekistan, expressed in terms of the support of a script shift in favour of Latin (a move which the UNCC opposes);
- the provision of textbooks and the broader issue of schooling in Uzbek language[155];
- a more critical stance towards the Kyrgyzstani leadership.

Sabirov did not benefit only from the support of the Society of Uzbeks, the organization he had founded in the mid-1990s. He could also count on a supportive voice in the local media. Mezon (newspaper) and Mezon TV, which Mr Sabirov does not own officially, constituted a new, less complacent voice towards state authorities, voice for the Uzbek population until 2000. Many would regard them as vehicles of nationalist propaganda, others as instruments of Mr Sabirov's own ambition. The latter view has become more popular since the closure by Mr Sabirov of the newspaper and the change in focus of the programmes broadcast on Mezon TV (more Brazilian soap operas and less politics[156]).

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[155]Mr Sabirov has recently (2003) funded and built a brand-new school in the heart of the Amir Temur district.

[156]This may also be move to respond to the preferences of the public. As Deputy B. Fattakhov told me (Bishkek, June 16, 2003): "Uzbeks are more interested in Esmeralda [a Brazilian soap very popular at the time of my visit in Kyrgyzstan in 2003] than they are in politics".

Over the years the activities of the O'zbeklar Jamiyati have become less regular, with the leader of the organization looking increasingly detached from its own organization. Sabirov's tone has become less aggressive and more conciliatory towards the authorities. If Sabirov's change of tones has certainly been beneficial to the political stability of the country, the reputation of the leader in question has been damaged by the widespread perception that he may have become too interested in improving his financial situation through closer links with state authorities. Alongside dealing in the gas sector, Mr Sabirov has recently focused on the construction sector, funding a series of projects in close proximity to the main Osh bazaar.

6.1.8. Summary

In sum, it appears that several visions have competed for the attention of the Uzbek public in Kyrgyzstan:

- the memory of the Osh conflict and the overarching concern for stability;
- discourses of civic integration and the associated (Soviet-inherited) claims of indigenousness;
- and nationalist frames.

Certainly structural factors have played a role in this process: government imposed limits on the use of nationalist propaganda have obviously hindered the creation of a resonating message to possibly mobilise the Uzbek population around its own Uzbekness and the perceptions of threat and siege (from the titular group). The absence of an ethnic political party has hindered the resonance of a primarily Uzbek voice, let alone its representation in national institutions. Some frames emerged and were appropriated by the larger community: among these the more moderate messages – with two exceptions aside, 1990-1992 and 1997-2000, - seem to have prevailed.

6.2. Tajikistan

6.2.1. The "Republic of Leninabad"?

Although its traditional dominance of Tajikistani political life (as well as the culture and economy) and the threat to this position were undoubtedly among the causes for

the outbreak of hostilities, Sughd remained by and large unscarred by the hostilities. The possibility that the northern province of Sughd might opt for outright secession has haunted the country's post-Soviet transition. Just how real was this possibility?

Muriel Atkin (1997 p.295) recalls that in the very early years of the 1990s (in 1992 particularly) Leninabad appeared on the verge of secession. Officials banned transmissions of radio and television programmes from Dushanbe, and took a range of institutions out of central control following the power struggle that since 1992 has embroiled centre-north relations. In addition, a separate provincial militia was established that year. Leninabad's obstructionism lasted until the end of 1992. The role ethnicity (i.e. the links between cross-border Uzbeks and the role of Uzbekistan) may have played in all this is disputed, but as John Schoeberlein has noted, Leninabad's secessionist bid may be explained by its refusal to accept Kulyabi domination rather than by its alleged loyalty to Tashkent (1996).

A second wave of separatist tendencies emerged in the second half of the 1990s, when elements of the northern opposition coalesced under Abdullajonov's Movement for National Revival, appeared to join forces with a renegade of the Tajik army, Col. M. Khudoyberdiev. On several occasions from 1996 to November 1998 disturbances and uprisings took place in different locations in the Sughd province. The final uprising was meant to lead Khudoyberdiev to take control of the whole province, whereas it ended up with him being forced to retreat into Uzbekistani territory, from where the insurgent militia allegedly crossed into Tajikistan. The insurrection failed, and Abdullajonov and Khudoyberdiev were expelled from Tajikistan in a seemingly definitive way. Various respondents (both Tajiks and Uzbeks) noted how ethnicity had little to do with Khudoyberdiev's actions and emphasized how looking at his ethnic background (Uzbek, although he is actually an ethnic Lakay and Lakays do not peacefully accept to being considered Uzbek) does not advance the understanding of his actions and the motives behind them. Some of the comments on Khudoyberdiev I came across during my interviews reflected similar feeling:

"He [Khudoyberdiev] did not care about Uzbeks or others. He cared about himself and his money".
"What did he come here for? He came here, took hold of a deposit guarded from the military where all

the heroin seized from officials had been stored and took it with him – this is how much he cared about us."

In addition, many recalled the outcome of his last appearance in Khujand in 1998. According to Validjon Ahmedov[157], Khudoyberdiev met fierce resistance from the republican army which would eventually overcome his militia. Also, the only building he could successfully took control of was interestingly the deposit of the drugs seized from the Tajikistani authorities in town.

"He took the drugs and fled. Nobody ever saw him again here."

This version of events is widely accepted by all respondents, regardless of their ethnic background and of their political orientation. Even among the most fiercely critical circles of Uzbek intellectuals[158] Khudoyberdiev is not remembered as a hero.

A direct fallout of these secessionist bids and/or uprisings lies in the caution with which people, especially Uzbeks, have addressed the question of autonomy for the Sughd province. In fact, autonomy is rarely indicated as a focus of Uzbek demands and even more rarely advanced as a possible solution to the province's problems. This is similar to the situation of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, where the memory of conflict had operated as a de-mobilizing idea and has pushed all parties involved towards moderation and support for authorities as guarantors of civil order. Additionally the outbreak of hostilities, reminiscent of analogous situations in the neighouring republic, was strongly associated with the presence of ethno-federal institutions. From my previous visits to Central Asia I have gathered the impression that autonomy is not associated with concepts such as devolution or local governance, but with secession, conflict, and war. Again, similarly to the Kyrgyzstani case, this has meant that the broad issue of political-territorial claims has completely disappeared from the agenda, paving the way for a monopolization of the Uzbek agenda by cultural demands.

Overall, though Leninabad was actually more integrated with Soviet Uzbekistan, in the post-independence era the idea of a 'republic of Leninabad'

[157]Centre for Democratic Transformations, Khujand, August 2003.
[158]Interviews held at "Chetvertaya Vlast' – NPO", a local NGO in Khujand (August 2003).

(Martin, 1997), appeared untenable to a large segment of the population. As Fatimakhon Ahmedova (Centre for Democratic Transformations in Khujand) explained:

"Especially in the first half of the 1990s there seemed to be a possibility for Leninabad to break away from the rest of Tajikistan. It was the richest and most developed region (culturally) and it traditionally dominated the political life of the republic. Once the country descended into chaos, some were left wondering about the future prospects. From a practical point of view the region could be self-sufficient, but politically no-one could imagine an independent Leninabad. Realistically speaking. Uzbekistan would expect it to be absorbed within its borders, and Tajikistan would never be keen to lose the engine of the country. Rather than becoming a satellite of Uzbekistan, people prefer to stay within Tajikistan."

Similar to the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks the fact that an autonomist frame does not dominate the Uzbek agenda does not diminish the extent of popular discontentment, "fueled by anger over the economic crises and by indignation over the influx of Kulyabi officials" (Akiner, 2001 p.65). Uzbekistan's presence in the province in the early 1990s (with Uzbek police and troops maintaining order in Khujand's streets) has been documented, though this does not lead to the conclusion that Uzbekistan's presence came out via invitation of the local population. Rather, the potential loss of a traditional area of influence during Soviet times – hence power politics concerns – convinced the Uzbekistani authorities to meddle with the Tajik events. Whatever separatist sentiments may have been present then, these faded in the following years. A separatist and even an autonomist agenda appear now not only unrealistic politically, but the very idea of establishing an independent state being annexed to Uzbekistan, or even just institutionalizing autonomy, are options rarely put forward in the north.

6.2.2. Discourses of indigenousness: "We are not a diaspora! We are locals, we didn't come from anywhere!"

The previous chapters have suggested that ethnicity has little bearing on the way the local population perceives itself and its relation with neighbours. This is confirmed

not only by survey data[159], but also by an analysis of the possible frames that have resonated across the Uzbek population. Among this is a strong frame of civic integration, particularly significant given that Tajikistan is a post-conflict society and this certainly bodes quite well for the reconstruction of the social fabric. This section explores different means of group self-categorization and relates them to more widespread discourses of indigenousness (as opposed to migrant or newcomer's identity), and attempts to overcome dychotomist images of majority and minority. Similar to the Kyrgyzstani case, Uzbek self-definition in Tajikistan draws on Soviet language and rejects terms such as diasporas and minority.

About one in two Uzbeks do not perceive themselves as constituting a national minority in Tajikistan (50.4%). About one third of respondents by contrast tended to share the opposite view (34.6%), whereas one in six (15%) did not express any opinion. As in the case of Kyrgyzstan, the question as to whether or not one community may be categorized as national minority is more a matter of status than mere statistics. No-one even advances the idea that on a strictly numerical level Uzbeks might not constitute a minority. What is subject to dispute among Uzbeks are the implications of this labeling. First, it entails a diminished status vis-à-vis Kyrgyz, not only the country's titular group, but above all a numerical majority. A minority status might also lead to a smaller role in public affairs. Finally, it might also generate an encirclement syndrome, a feeling of being isolated from kins in Uzbekistan, and from fellow citizens because of a typology which de facto divides the citizenry into first and second class citizens. The idea of being seen as a national minority is largely rejected on the basis that Uzbeks are the largest community in the country after the titular group, but also constitute the majority in some areas – e.g. rural areas in the Sughd province.

Similar perceptions are common also with regard to the idea of being considered as a diasporic community. As already observed in the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, respondents in Tajikistan appeared to reject being categorized as a diasporic community. Negative feelings associated with this type of label were even more conspicuous (36.8%), to emphasise even further the claim to indigenousness and the fact that Uzbeks "did not migrate here [Tajikistan] from anywhere". Only a very

[159] Bozrikova (2003 and 2004) and Ifes (1996a).

marginal percentage (7.5%) tends to associate positive feelings with the term diaspora, whereas one in five (20.3%) and one in three (35.3%) are either indifferent or have no feelings about the question (35.3%) respectively. Again, individual interviews followed a pattern similar to the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, where many more showed objections, allegedly based on historical or etymological grounds, to the appropriateness of the use of the term. Comments such as the following are common:

"Uzbeks have been here forever". "We did not come from anywhere! This is our land".

Having established that Tajikistani Uzbeks do not see themselves as either a diaspora or national minority, I then sought to understand how they actually perceive themselves. This was not just a matter of a pedantic drive for categorization. Although there were certainly practical concerns for finding a "label" (in order to avoid referring to Uzbek people all the time), there was a more serious motive. Opting for one term (diaspora, for example) rather than another (member of the Kyrgyzstani nation) reveals how the new state and the new state identity are perceived from potentially marginal groups and the ideas about the state that the group might be forming. In northern Tajikistan the majority of Uzbeks perceived themselves as historical nation (60.8%)[160], and via this advancing a claim of indigenousness and symbolic ownership of the territory (locale). Given the opportunity to choose among many options, one in two Uzbeks changed his/her mind with regard to the option national minority (the percentage decreasing form 40.2 to the first question to 19.2% in the following). Only a very marginal number responded diaspora (0.8%), whereas one in ten opted for ethnic community (etnicheskaya obshchina)[161].

As Foroughi (2002 p.45) – among the others - noted, ethnicity is not a clear-cut phenomenon when it comes to Uzbeks and Tajiks. They may speak different languages (although in areas of mixed settlement they tend to speak both fluently), but "no clear differences exist between Tajik and Uzbek ethnic groups"' (ibid.). In most cases, members of either community tend to agree with this view. Furthermore,

[160]The term historical nation is understood in similar ways in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
[161]In addition, 3.8% answered titular nation *(titul'naya natsiya)* and 4.6% indicated other.

the case of Uzbeks and Tajiks demonstrates how ethnicity per se is an extremely complex phenomenon and is not considered a relevant cleavage among ordinary peoples. As Olimov and Olimova (2002 p.249) have noted, Uzbeks are "nearly as proud as Tajiks of their country's newly acquired independence"[162]. A survey conducted by the authors in the mid-1990s reveals that 47% of Uzbeks are proud of their citizenship, 30.4% are dissatisfied with it, whereas only 8% are indifferent to it and 1.9% are dissatisfied with or ashamed of it. This is no minor achievement for a country with so brief and turbulent an history as Tajikistan. Moreover this also confirms that that dual loyalties (ethnic cultural identities and political allegiances) can co-exist without being seen as problematic. This does not apply to all communities in the country, though, as in a similar study conducted on Russians then appears in a counter-tendency, with just about 14.5% of Tajikistan's Russians proud of their citizenship, 21.6% not proud at all, and 39.1% indifferent to it (Ifes, 1996).

Olimov and Olimova do not underestimate the sources of tensions among the two groups (e.g. tense bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and a negative fall-out on state-group relation; problems with border demarcation, visa regime, labour competition and political representation, ibid., p.250). However, Olimov and Olimova suggest that overall there has been a trade-off between the economic and political realm between Tajiks and Uzbeks. Uzbeks may have lost something in terms of political influence, but this has been composed by the strength gained by the Uzbek economic elite, which has better adapted to the new post-Soviet and economic environment.

6.2.3. Summary

Separatism and indigenousness/integration have been the only two themes that have to different extent resonated among the local population. However, at the present stage the former has not been framed into an articulated mobilizing idea, that is a set of core beliefs sufficiently powerful to rally members of the group in a mobilizational process. The latter, by contrast, has contributed to de-mobilizing the Uzbek population. Depoliticisation of ethnicity has resonated across the Uzbek community. What seems to be missing is a vision in some way reminiscent of the

[162]This view is confirmed also by Bozrikova (2003) and the Ifes survey (1996).

"UZ campaign" orchestrated by Davron Sabirov in southern Kyrgyzstan. This should not come as a surprise given that Tajiks and Uzbeks have a tradition of long and peaceful, indeed integrated, co-existence on the the Tajik side of the Ferghana Valley. A high degree of intermarriage, bilingualism, and cultural similarities (from traditions to food, from weddings to funeral rites) make the two groups at times hard to distinguish.

6.3. Conclusion

The way particular issues are framed by movement leaders (typically) or by ordinary members of a group (perhaps less frequently so) guides political action by creating an idea which resonates across the community itself and around which the group unifies and sets to act. From a discussion of data presented in this chapter it is possible to infer three main conclusions.

First, both cases suggest that a pre-conflict situation is more likely to assist in the emergence of a mobilizing idea than a post-conflict one. A mobilizing idea resonating widely across the community emerged in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period (1990-92) when changes in the Soviet and republican opportunity structure were taking place. The aftermath of the Osh conflict brought an end to a set of ideas which included a separatist agenda or the possibility of establishing an autonomous region in the south of the country. The memory or legacy of the conflict de facto hindered the development of a similarly powerful mobilizing idea thereafter. A similar situation took place in Tajikistan, where the two most powerful and radical set of ideas (the splitting of Leninabad from the rest of the country) took place in two different contexts. However, while a crucial distinction should be drawn between the two phases (early 1990s and late 1990s), the latter period saw an increase in the use of nationalist frames, but this was arguably due more to personal interests than to anything related to ethnic issues.

Second, the case of Kyrgyzastan points to the fact that the emergence of a mobilising idea precedes action. Widespread perceptions of disadvantage and a loss in status contributed to the heightening of tensions which in the end led up to the Osh conflict in 1990. The use of nationalist frames in 1997-2000 supports this thesis. Since the establishment of the Society of Uzbeks on the one hand, and of two media outlets as vehicles for propaganda on the other, Davron Sabirov has been able to

frame a set of grievances, needs, and demands of the Uzbek population which also increased the level of tensions in the southern regions, culminating in his electoral success in 2000. In Tajikistan, however, it appears that rarely was the outbreak of a significant action related to a previously articulated vision. The separatist phase in the early 1990s was preceded by a mobilizing idea, which included perceptions about possible loss of political influence and economic power were actually present. The second phase in 1996-98 was completely different in nature, and although a separatist sentiment was still present, the uprisings were based on completely different grounds (power politics).

Third, perceptions and ideas about the Uzbek question underwent several phases. It is possible to associate one or more (de-)mobilizing idea to each phase. The changes in the political structure at Union level and the reconfiguration of the power structure across regions in the country opened a window of opportunity for the formation of new ideas. Perceptions of economic disadvantage and loss in status generated a highly pervasive mobilizing idea (Uzbeks under siege) which lasted well beyond the conflict, although were not articulated to become a significant mobilizing idea. Whatever separatist or autonomist bids there might have been, these were prevented by state actors from combining with the grievances into a potentially far more explosive mobilizing idea. The intervention of both state actors and individual leaders replaced an emerging mobilizing idea with a de-mobilizing idea: the perception that for a similar conflict not to repeat itself, support should be given to whoever appears willing to and capable of maintaining ethnic stability. Alongside these ideas a more nationalist one developed, the exception rather than the norm, framed by the local businessman and politician D. Sabirov in the period 1997-2000. The softening of tone from his side in 2000 (following his election) greatly contributed to a decreasing level of tension, although some still persist.

Tajikistani Uzbeks did not seem to develop a similar set of competing ideas. Quite the contrary, the lack of any articulated vision appears to be one of the factors behind the lack of political action among Uzbeks living in the northern region. The perceived change in the political opportunity structure in 1990-1992 with the unfolding power battle between regions contributed to the development of a possible separatist idea which was much more regional than national in essence. The 1992-

1997 war left Leninabad de facto isolated from the rest of the country and the Peace Accords signed in 1997 also failed to re-integrate the region in the political and economic system. The wave of uprisings from 1996 to 1998 owed more to power politics than to separatist bids, and in any case ethnicity played little part in those events. Similarly to the Kyrgyzstani case, concern for possible new outbreaks of conflict have constituted a form of mobilizing idea where concern for stability translates into support for the ruling faction (although Uzbeks in Tajikistan feel less guaranteed from Rakhmonov than Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks from Akaev).

Overall, ideas in Kyrgyzstan also appear to unify the members of the community in a much tighter way than they happen to do in the neighbouring republic. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks have assisted in developing the presence, from the second half of the 1990s, of two distinct (de-)mobilizing ideas: the memory of the 1990 Osh conflict and the necessity to preserve ethnic stability and to support whoever is perceived to guarantee that stability (until recently Askar Akaev), and Islam. Sporadically a third – more powerful and potentially more destabilizing – idea has emerged: that Uzbeks might be "under siege", as framed by the deputy Davran Sabirov, especially in the 1997-2000 period.

A striking similarity concerns the formation of a very significant set of beliefs among Uzbeks in both countries: the formation of the idea of being part of a citizenry, where ethnicity is an important dimension of one's identity, but has no necessary political implications. Particularly emphasised was the rejection to adopt what seems a confrontational terminology of "us vs. them" such as that of majority and minority. This finding is important because it confirms the thesis advanced in chapter 4 that, while ethnicity may well continue to play a role as a source of collective identification, it is accompanied by other forms of identification, namely a civic one, which accepts Kyrgyzstani citizenship as a permanent condition with the attached obligations (loyalty to the state, political identities that transcend ethnic boundaries) as well as the rights (expectations of fair treatment and equal opportunities). It is therefore possible to conclude that at the moment ethnicity does not appear to be used as a resource or framed as a mobilizing idea by any political actor until now. Concern for ethnic stability is of critical importance for both Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

CHAPTER 7

Uzbek Political Actors

Leadership, elite fragmentation, and popular perceptions

This chapter is about Uzbek actors, individual and collective, and their strategies. Following Hay, agency refers to "the ability of an actor to act consciously and [...] to attempt to realise his or her intentions" (2002 p.94). Agency therefore implies the possibility of choice between different courses of action. Though Hay associated rationality ("the capacity of the actor to select modes of conduct best likely to realise a given set of preferences", ibid, p.95), with the concept of agency, He does not adopt a rational choice approach. Rather he emphasises how interests are not fixed (as rational choice theorists would instead assume), but vary according to the changing identities, interests, motivations and the strategic calculation of the actor himself/herself. Finally the actor's reflexivity allows him/her to "reflect upon the consequences of previous action", and adapt the strategy accordingly, ibid.).

First I look at collective actors, namely the official – though by no means exclusive or representative, as will be shown - Uzbek organizations: the national-cultural centres. Second I introduce individual actors: the Uzbek elites and particularly their leadership. This includes the "official" Uzbek leadership, possible challengers, and what I call the "un-heard voices", the views of those actors w.ho for different reasons have so far remained marginal to the Uzbek mobilizational process. The chapter does not stop at the elite level. As Dmitry Gorenburg has correctly observed with regard to minority nationalism in the Russian Federation, ethnic entrepreneurs cannot mobilise the masses if they do not relate themselves to them (2003). While it is certainly important to understand who the actors are and their strategies, it is equally important to look at the popular perceptions of these leaders. In other words: what do the rank and file think of them? This is the scope of the third and final section of this chapter.

In the pages to come I discuss the following factors:

- Identity and type of leadership: who are the leaders and what type of leaders are they (i.e. task-oriented or people-oriented)?
- Strategy[163]: What is their strategic goal? How do they intend to achieve it and what type of relationship do they develop with the ruling elite (ie confrontational or co-operative)?
- Relations between followers and leaders: How are leaders and their actions perceived by the wider Uzbek population?

The chapter argues that an agency-based approach sheds light on the dynamics of Uzbek political mobilization. In particular, it shows that leadership matters: the extent to which a community presents or is represented by a unified leadership makes a difference. No cohesive leadership has emerged among Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. However, the chapter shows that there are significant differences between the two cases, characterised by a lack of leadership in the former case and by intra-elite struggles in the latter. Though the current leaders have managed to retain their privileged status as the only officially sanctioned legitimate actors within the community, criticism – private rather than public – has emerged, suggesting a de-coupling of rank and file from the elites, and possibly also from the strategy of close co-operation with the state administration that has come to define Uzbek political behaviour since independence.

7.1. Collective actors and mobilising structures: The national-cultural centres

Officially promoted by members of the groups itself, but de facto a top-down organization benefiting from the support of state institutions, national cultural centres represent the "official voice" of Uzbek communities in both countries.

[163]As noted in chapter 3, strategy here refers to "the selection of objectives and the search for the most appropriate means to achieve those objectives within a particular context at a particular moment in time" (Hay, 1995 p.190).

7.1.1. Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is home to two organizations established to promote Uzbek interests: the National-Cultural Centre (O'zbek Milliy Madaniyat Markazi) and the Society of Uzbeks (O'zbeklar Jamiyati).

The "Uzbek National-Cultural Centre" (UNCC)

The National-cultural Centre is the Uzbek community's official voice in Kyrgyzstan. It is also the elder of the two groups (the other being the Society of Uzbeks, see below), as it was established in September 1990 following the June clashes in Osh and Uzgen. It is structured along regional lines (there are branches in Osh, Jalalabat, Batken, and Chui provinces) and the association is co-ordinated at a national level in Bishkek. Along with other (minority) cultural centres it is represented in the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan. I illustrate the nature of the organization and its objectives by referring to the proceedings of a recent Kurultai (Assembly), held in Osh on 17th May 2003, and through conversations with Uzbek respondents also indicated themselves to be representing the general aims of the organization. The Kurultai (Qurultoi in Uzbek) is a gathering where the leaders of the Uzbek community meet to discuss the conditions of the Uzbek people living in Kyrgyzstan and debate the agenda of the organization.

As the following discussion shows, attention focused on primarily cultural and political issues, leaving economic questions on the sideline of the debate (as shown in chapter 5 economic grievances are not at the top of the Uzbek agenda). Of paramount concern was instead the necessity to preserve and improve the relations between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz peoples in Kyrgyzstan (*"nash rodnoi dom"*, was often noted), so that episodes of discrimination are reduced to a minimum. The question of the denomination of the Uzbek community also received considerable attention: the label "diaspora", often used in the state media and official publications was rejected ("People must not speak of an Uzbek diaspora. We are a majority here, we are a titular and indigenous nation"[164]). The term "national minority" was also considered unsuitable, given what said mentioned above about the demographics of the country.

[164]Interestingly, Mamasaidov refers to Uzbekistani Kyrgyz as a diaspora in his contribution to *Etnicheskii Mir* (1995), whereas within a few lines he mentions simply "Uzbeks", without feeling the need to qualify the term.

The debate included two more specific demands, one of which was the inclusion of more Uzbeks in the police and secret services, where they are under-represented. The other, due to the introduction of a visa regime between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, was to seek the establishment of a consulate of Uzbekistan in Osh and was deemed a particularly pressing issue (though this demand was not directly posed to the Kyrgyzstani authorities, but the Uzbekistani ones)[165].

The discussion then shifted to more cultural issues. First the question of schools and textbooks was discussed, and references made to the precarious situation in the border town of Kara-suu, where the number of schools offering tuition in Uzbek was considered insufficient. Second, the issue of the script in which the Uzbek language should be written was addressed. The UNCC has repeatedly argued that Uzbek should be written in Cyrillic so as not to alienate the Uzbek population from the rest of the population (in Kyrgyzstan it is written in Cyrillic). Also, the Kurultai recommended the establishment of an Uzbek theatre in the city of Jalalabat, in addition to the one ("Babur") already existing in Osh, de facto the centre's *longa manus* in the arts.

Finally, the question of intra-Uzbek factionalism was briefly mentioned: the fact that in Osh there are two cultural centres constituted an "element of concern" and the assembly unanimously recommended that tribalism among Uzbeks be avoided" (endless animated discussions followed the Kurultai between the two Uzbek organizations as to whether the Society of Uzbeks, discussed below, had been invited and decline to participate, or whether this organization had been deliberately excluded from the works of the Kurultai).

While more "political demands" have not been met over the years, in the fields of education some progress has been made. Under the pressure of the UNCC a Kyrgyz-Uzbek University was established in the early 1990s, where tuition would be provided in the two Turkic languages and Russian. Within the same institution a printing house was opened, that would help solve (partially) one of the thorniest issues in the relations between community and state authorities: the shortage of educational material in Uzbek language (following the shift of Uzbekistan to Latin script and the interruption of the provision of textbooks).

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[165]Uzbekistan finally agreed to open a consulate in the city of Osh in July 2003 (*ASR-Asia*, 25 July 2003), though it has not given any following to this statement.

The "Society of Uzbeks"

The Society of Uzbeks was founded in 1996-97 by the Osh-based businessman and politician Davron Sabirov in order to create an organization that would appear less closely associated with state authorities that were perceived as increasingly unresponsive to Uzbek demands. Davron Sabirov is probably the closest Osh has to a media tycoon (he owns Mezon newspaper and, until 2004, Mezon TV[166]). However, in striking contrast with most representatives of the UNCC, Sabirov has never sought to mask his political ambitions or the political nature of his organization.

During 1996 Davron Sabirov was nominated chair of the UNCC, which he intended to rename "Society of Uzbeks" and re-position it as less openly supportive of state authorities[167] in order to break away from the official denomination and thus broaden the appeal of the organization and make it more inclusive of the broader Uzbek community. Another key element of discord between D. Sabirov and the local leadership in Osh regarded the Uzbek NCC's position on the matter of script. Mr D. Sabirov supported the shift to Latin alphabet following Uzbekistan, whereas many saw this as a pro-Uzbekistani and therefore de-stabilising manoeuvre. Senior leaders of the organization feared these moves would threaten government support and endanger the policy of inter-ethnic stability.

Although not formally expelled, D. Sabirov was left with no choice but to leave the organization. He would shortly thereafter establish a parallel organization under a new denomination. The Society of Uzbeks now claims a formal membership of 10,000 members[168], although active members amount to only a few hundred. The structure of the Society is similar to that of UNCC (although less articulated, given its local dimension – it is present in Osh only), with a president, and a presidium. An assembly (a Kurultai parallel to that of the UNCC) should have been convened already, but Mr Sabirov himself maintained that this "would happen some time in the near future". The construction of a new building for the organization, supposedly at

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[166]Until 2004 Mr Sabirov used to chair the company KyrgyzGas in Osh. Mezon newspaper was suddenly closed in March 2000, soon after the parliamentary elections in which Mr D. Sabirov was elected to the Jogorku Kenesh after a long controversy regarding a racist political commercial broadcast on Osh TV (see later). It reappeared earlier in 2005 before and during Mr Sabirov's electoral campaign, only to see its publications newly suspended right after his election.

[167]Conversations with students at the Department of Uzbek Philology at Osh State University, members of the UNCC from Karasuu, Osh June-July 2003.

[168]Interview with Davron Sabirov, Osh 16 July 2003.

the foot of Mt Solomon in Osh, has come to a halt in recent years and Mr Sabirov seems to have turned his attention elsewhere (to the construction sector). With his involvement in Uzbek politics fading, his rhetorical tone has also been moderated.

A small survey conducted by the author among 54 Uzbek respondents belonging to local political, cultural and economic elite, suggests that more than half of the respondents cannot be identified with any of the two organizations. The perceptions of local Uzbeks on such centres is presented below, and it suffices here to say that most respondents show scepticism with regard to the effectiveness of either organization. Second, while D. Sabirov tends to make realistic claims with respect to the membership of his association, UNCC activists claimed that "all Uzbeks are members of the UNCC". To my requests for more specific details on the exact figures, a typical response was "the UNCC is the organization of all Uzbeks and all Uzbeks of the town are members". Considering that no such a thing as automatic membership, this seems instead to suggest that membership is probably at a much lower level than perhaps hoped.

Both organizations claim to be dealing with cultural issues and demands. Members of the UNCC systematically underscore how politics lies beyond the scope of the organization. These statements are highly problematic, for a number of reasons. First the leading figures of these groups are also well known politicians, active at both local and national level. Even those who most vehemently reject any political involvement (i.e. K. Batyrov, founder and head of the Batyrov University in Jalalabat and among the wealthiest men in the country) find it hard to convincingly portray themselves as non political. Mr Batyov is head of the Jalalabat UNCC, has hosted repeated conferences of the UNCC and has created his own institutions providing higher education to Uzbek students. This is politics in all but name. The organization itself (UNCC) is represented in a national institution (Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan). This clearly poses a serious question as to the political/non-political divide, which appears extremely blurred, especially in non-democratic settings. After all, the proceedings of the various Kurultais consist of demands to be addressed by the country's national leadership.

7.1.2. Tajikistan: The tyranny of structurelessness?

Even in Tajikistan, the task of promoting and representing Uzbek interests has so far been appropriated by the local national cultural centre. Uzbek action is framed within the Society of Uzbeks (better known with its Russian name, the *Obshchestvo Uzbekov*). Established in September 1990 under the denomination of "Cultural Centre of Uzbeks of Tajikistan", it re-named itself in 1992. The Society of Uzbeks has branches in Dushanbe, Khujand and the Sughd region (established in 1991), Qurghonteppa, Penjikent, and Khatlon region.

The Society of Uzbeks was founded and chaired for most of the past decade by Mr. Qurbon Sattarov, a former Komsomol' and party executive[169]. During the mid-1990s the Society claimed to have a formal membership of 530,000 individuals[170]. This is undoubtedly old information, but due to more recent developments which have left the Society lacking national co-ordination, it seems that no-one possesses this sort of information any more. The Khujand branch claims a membership of 900 as of August 2003. Similarly to its counterpart in Kyrgyzstan the goals of the organization are "to promote the interests of ethnic Uzbeks and [also] to promote ethnic co-operation"[171]. The Society aims primarily at achieving "political stability, overcoming the effects of the period of stagnation, protection of rights and interests of the Uzbek and Uzbek-speaking population, strengthening the centuries-long friendship between Tajiks and Uzbeks, and other ethnic groups of Tajikistan"[172]. More practically, the Society is mainly concerned with cultural issues, most notably in the educational field (provision of textbooks, literature, and staff for Uzbek pupils). As known, during Soviet times, material published in Uzbek language used to be supplied by Tashkent. Due to the severing of links with the Uzbekistani government during the past decade, however, these duties have been shifted to local companies. Lack of funding (excessive cost of printing paper is one of the key problems) leaves local printing houses stranded.

With regard to higher education the closure of the border with Uzbekistan has meant that the teaching staff would have to be trained in Tajikistan. The entire

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[169]Asia-Plus (1996).
[170]Ibid.
[171]Gurr et al. (2000).
[172] Ibid.

educational system in Tajikistan therefore needs to be re-designed to accommodate these demands. The presence of a department of Uzbek philology and of some Uzbek classes in other subjects constitutes only a palliative in an area of critical importance to the Uzbek community: the development of adequate means for delivering information to the Uzbek population. This includes adjustment of broadcasting time in Uzbek language (on state TV and radio) and the establishment of local newspapers edited in Uzbek language.

Finally the exodus of Uzbeks from Tajikistan was a key concern in the early years of the Society. During the civil war the Society estimates that about 70,000 Uzbeks left Tajikistan[173]. Again, Uzbekistan's strict border regime has unilaterally brought a solution to this problem, as it has de facto made (legal) immigration from Tajikistan nearly impossible.

The Society of Uzbeks does not depend on state funding, but derives its budget from individual donations and revenues from events such as music festivals or other public activities[174]. Similarly to other cultural organizations (co-ordinated at national level by the Congress of the Peoples of Tajikistan), it has very close relations with state authorities. In fact it can be argued that the Society is an "appendix" of state administration, as it is more accountable to it than to the community it claims to represent (see below)[175]. The Sughd branch of the organization has a central office in Khujand and another twelve local representations in the province's districts, the most significant of which are clearly those where Uzbeks are concentrated: Nau, Jabbor Rassulov, Shakhristan, Bobojon Ghafurov, and Kanibadam[176].

Besides being isolated from the rest of the country in many other respects, the Sughd region is itself internally divided along sub-regional lines. Despite the fact that the centres in the Hissar Valley, most notably Penjikent, formally belong to the Sughd province, they tend to operate separately. This is mostly due to one of the long-lasting and unresolved problems affecting and hindering Tajikistan's national integration: the lack of communication and transport links within the country. Many have noted how Khujand and its surrounding are more closely connected to

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[173]ibid.
[174]Interview with Mr Ismatov (Khujand branch of the Society of Uzbeks), August 2003.
[175]For similar sceptical views on the representativeness of this kind of organization see Fane (1996).
[176]No office has been opened in the district of Isfara (Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border).

Uzbekistan than to the rest of Tajikistan. In light of problems with communication links and regional relations, the Society of Uzbeks was better conceived as an "umbrella organization"[177], supervising rather than leading regional organizations. The role was fulfilled by the chairman of the organization in Dushanbe, Mr Sattarov, but since his retirement from political life in 2000 central co-ordination has waned. Though regional branches are still operational, they are by and large unrelated to each other, the central office has all but imploded. The position of chairman is currently vacant, and there is no rush to find a replacement[178]. This, some argue, is a good thing as each national cultural centre can more flexibly address the concerns of the local population. "Demands and Uzbek problems are different in Khujand and Kulyab", according to Mr Ismatov, a leading figure of the local Society of Uzbeks In Khujand:

"Here [in Khujand] Uzbeks and Tajiks live side by side peacefully, whereas in the south there are more tensions. There (in the south) there was war, while here we did not have any. We are very well integrated".

The northern branch of the Society of Uzbeks deals primarily with cultural matters. "These organizations are not political. We deal with cultural questions, and we do not interfere with the government in political affairs". "Our primary concerns lie in the safeguarding of Uzbek customs (*obichie*) and cultural spirituality (*kul'turnaya dukhovnost'*)". The claimed non political nature of the organization clashes with what some local Uzbeks see as a "sell out" to the ruling elite. The official position of the organization is one of good relations with the government (Mr Sattarov's office in Dushanbe used to be located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs[179]) and the president in particular. In fact, support for the state administration is among the topics any respondent from the organization regularly emphasises. "We do not side with the opposition". "We support the administration". The organization in Khujand publishes its own newspaper, *Kadriyat*, which has close links with the oblast *khukumat* (province administration). Other local newspaper in Uzbek language,

[177]Gurr et al. (2000).
[178]Interviews with members of the Society of Uzbeks in Khujand, August, 2003
[179]Fane (1996).

include *Leninobod Khaqiqati* (The Truth of Leninabad); the two newspapers share the same building and office as well as political orientations.

A final caveat is necessary. The Society of Uzbeks should not be linked with the so-called "third force" (Akbarzadeh, 2001), the power faction led by the former prime minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov (at least until this movement was allowed to operate on Tajik territory). Two questions seem to have severely hindered the creation of a cohesive organization promoting Uzbek interests: the 'national revival' of groups such as the Lakays, which Uzbeks perceive as a sub-group of ethnic Uzbeks. In recent years Uzbeks have resented government policies aimed at enhancing Lakay self-consciousness to the detriment of Uzbek identity and numerical relevance (census). A second issue lies in the retirement of the former leader Sattarov from politics, leaving a void at the top of Uzbek organization (see next section).

7.1.3. Level of organization and group cohesion

Except for the Society of Uzbeks led by Davron Sabirov, which is an exclusively Osh-based organization, the other two centres in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are similar in structure and organization, at least on paper. In practice however, they could hardly be more different. The Kyrgyzstani organization has a capillary presence throughout most of the Kyrgyzstani territory, or at least in those areas where Uzbeks are concentrated. Although the regional branches can organize autonomously, the Bishkek office exercises functions of co-ordination and leadership, setting the main guidelines and strategy. The occasion for delineating such a strategy is the Kurultai, where representatives from all centres and sections gather in what resembles more a display of loyalty to the administration[180] than a forum for strategic discussions.

The Tajikistani organization, by contrast, has gone through a process of fragmentation along regional and sub-regional lines. Since its foundation in 1990 and until the late nineties the organization maintained a level of organization and

[180]Conversation with Mr Adiljan Abidov, former head of the UNCC and now Osh representative for the PNES ("The Kurultai was absurd", he said, Osh, 18 July 2003), the correspondent of the Uzbek newspaper DDD Ba'rno-opa (15 July, 2003), and the Osh-based journalist Almaz Ismanov (Osh, June, 2003).

strategic co-ordination similar to that of the Kyrgyzstani UNCC. The Kurultai and the figure of Sattarov provided the regional branches with the main guidelines. The second half of the nineties, with the end of the civil war (paradoxically) and the sanctioned marginalisation of the northern political faction led to a loss in efficacy of the organization. As already noted, each regional branch now operates in complete autonomy from the centre[181]. The regional branch in Khujand now operates as a co-ordinator for part of the Sughd region (the area located in the Hissar Valley and Penjikent are out of reach due to both practical (difficult communications) and possibly political reasons (the state administration are reported to stir up divisions between factions across the northern province[182]). This means that at a regional level the organization still operates and maintains close links with branches in the districts (most of which are within one or two hours' drive from Khujand). However, the lack of close links with other regions[183] and the absence of a central referent who sets strategy and deals with the government in Dushanbe adds to the perception of isolation from Uzbeks in the north (perceptions shared by many Tajiks).

For the purpose of this section I mainly relied on interviews with local members of the Uzbek organization or local journalists. I then sought to make my findings more robust by comparing them with those contained in the database on minority mobilization created by the "Minority at Risk Project" (University of Maryland). I took into consideration one single variable, which appeared as the most suitable to measure the degree of group organization: "group organization and cohesion" (label: GOJPA, table 7.1)[184]. The value of organization for political action among Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks is reported as low in the four time periods in which that variable was measured (1995, 1998, 1999, and 2000). The value 2 indicates that interests of the group in question are promoted by one or more conventional organizations, which draw their support primarily from members of the group itself.

[181]Interview with Mr Ismatov of the Khujandi branch of the Society of Uzbeks (August, 2003).
[182]Martin (1997).
[183]The absence of links with the Khatlon organization is particularly lamented by members of the Khujand centre.
[184]More precisely, the variable GOJPA measures the group's organization for political action in terms of type and strategies of organizations representing the group. Values range from 0 (no organizations representing the group) to 5 (militant organizations) through 1 (group interests promoted by umbrella organizations), 2 (group interests are promoted by one or more conventional political movements/parties drawing their support mainly or primarily from the group), 3 (conventional and militant organizations that have limited support), and 4 (mainly promoted by militant organizations, and marginally by conventional organizations).

Unlike Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, the level of organization among Tajikistani Uzbeks is weak at best (1), indicating that group interested were mostly promoted by umbrella organizations (such as the Society of Uzbeks), rather than by more cohesive and internally institutionalised organizations.

Table 7.1 Group organization for political action (GOJPA, 1990-2000[185])

Year	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
1995	2	1
1998	2	1
1999	2	1
2000	2	1

The institutional form through which mobilization is expressed is one of the most significant dimensions of ethnic mobilization (Barany, 2002b p.72). Though in ethnically divided societies groups tend to organize along ethnic lines (Horowitz, 1985 p.291-297), this is not always the case, especially in non democratic settings where political participation and representation are restricted. In fact, in neither Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan are ethnic parties allowed. Tajikistan has introduced a ban on regional parties as well, requiring all political organizations to have a branch in each of the four provinces. This de facto prevents the formation of parties with a base in one region (a sensitive issue in a regionally divided society such as the Tajik one). In addition, both regimes have banned ethnically-based parties. In a way this could also be defined as a Soviet legacy or better as a lesson from the Soviet collapse. The role that ethnic institutions have played in leading to the demise of the Soviet Union through nationalist mobilization has been widely recognised in the literature. This has informed the mindset of the post-Soviet state elites and their normative adversity to the formation of any institution or mobilising structure which the group may use as a resource to mobilise support. A notable exception is constituted in both cases by the national-cultural centres. This study has shown that these organizations, which thus far provide an outlet for airing Uzbek demands, have not acted as autonomous mobilising structures, but as structures of legitimation of the regime. The regime, in other words, sets the limits of what is legitimate and what is not. Rather than as vehicles of mobilization, NCCs act as funnels, through which a selection of Uzbek voices are channelled whilst others are marginalized and silenced.

[185]There are only four years for which data are available.

This section has outlined the main vehicles for mobilization available to the Uzbek population in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The two organizations are similar in many respects. They are both top-down structures, not accountable to the local population and closely associated with the state authorities (with the notable exception of the Society of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan). The organizations are also similar in that they are formally present nation-wide and operate through regional (oblast' and city) branches, though – quite understandably – they tend to concentrate in areas of strong Uzbek settlement. They are primarily concerned with cultural issues (education, information, language), and are quite wary of advancing explicitly political demands, though language has become such divisive and politicised issue in Kyrgyzstan that arguing that the issue of languages status constitutes a cultural demand appears questionable at best. A critical difference between the two cases lies in the state of near collapse into which the Society of Uzbeks in Tajikistan has descended in recent years, which has made the whole organization virtually inoperative. By contrast Kyrgyzstani Uzbek organizations appear more articulate and operative, arguably because of competition for the attention of the Uzbek population, but also for state attention, between the two.

7.2. SEARCHING FOR LEADERS

7.2.1. Kyrgyz Republic: Leadership fragmentation

In Kyrgyzstan intense competition for leadership among Uzbeks has given rise to leadership fragmentation – too many leaders that are too divided, more concerned with disturbing each other than in co-operating for a common goal.

The beginning

Rather than mobilising against authorities in a similar way to other instances of nationalist contention that were taking place all across the Soviet Union, Uzbeks have sided with state authorities and maintained this strategy throughout the whole post-independence period. In fact, one of the defining elements of the newly established Uzbek cultural centre was the concern for stability and inter-ethnic harmony. This appeared as a particularly pressing issue in the early 1990s, following

the Osh events. Also, this strategy serves the purpose of countering the belief that Uzbeks in the south of the country had an agenda aiming at a land swap or outright annexation to neighbouring Uzbekistan. The fear among Kyrgyzstani authorities that Uzbeks in the south might play the role of a "fifth column" never actually vanished, despite the Uzbek community's commitment to the state-building project of the Kyrgyzstani state under President Akaev's leadership.

The tie between Uzbeks and Akaev became a cornerstone, a goal in itself, of Uzbek organizational policy: stability for the sake of stability. This task appeared particularly urgent at a time when debates between advocates of a civic Kyrgyzstani nation and a more ethnic interpretation of the nation started to question the role of ethnic minorities in the country. Despite Akaev's commitment to building an inclusive Kyrgyzstani nation, this appeared easier said than done, and balancing different regional and clan interests led the state leadership down a difficult and deeply contradictory path where two competing ideologies were simultaneously promoted: reviving Manas (enhancing ethnic Kyrgyz) and advancing an idea of nation based on citizenship (Megoran, 2002d). The debate over language and the enhancement of the status of Kyrgyz in a country where not even the titular nation appeared fluent in its own language, threatened the position of minority groups. The transcript of the speech of the then chairman of the UNCC Adikjan Abidov illustrates well the program and demands of the centre in the early 1990s[186]: "free development of language for all nationalities; opportunities in higher education for the Uzbek population; cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; scarce representation of Uzbeks in power state structures. In addition, the following demands were advanced: provision of information in Uzbek and Tajik languages[187]; creation of a higher education institution of the sort of the Kyrgyz-Slavic University in Bishkek, in order to fulfil the intellectual potential of the Uzbek youth; solution of the issue of the dual citizenship". With regard to the latter question, the solution advanced by the UNCC was un-ambiguous:

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[186]Abidov (1994).

[187]At the time there was no Tajik cultural centre and the Uzbek supported this demands of the Tajik-speaking population in the southern provinces (especially in rural areas of the Batken and Osh regions).

"we have only one homeland, the land where we were born. We were born here, in Kyrgyzstan and that is our homeland"[188].

The representatives of the organization do not conceal that they share and fully support the administration's goal of a stable multi-ethnic state built on peaceful relations between the more than a hundred ethnic groups living in the country. Uzbek leaders appropriate President Akaev's slogan of "Kyrgyzstan is our common home" and share his concern that "preserving civic peace is the most important goal, more critical than surviving cold and famine"[189]. Almost every conversation I had with members of the UNCC started with the sentence: "We fully support the goals of the state's leadership". The next sentence was a statement of self-positioning in the power struggle taking place in Kyrgyzstan since independence: "we do not have anything to do with the Kyrgyz opposition". Support for the president has become not a means to achieve a specific objective, but a strategy per se, indeed one of the defining characteristics of the official Uzbek cultural centres. As Eugene Huskey has defined it (2002), this has become an "act of faith" in the capacity of the Kyrgyzstani leadership's capacity to maintain inter-ethnic stability.

Public meetings of the organization include frequent references to political under-representation and to the cadre policy, particularly to the lack of Uzbeks in specific sectors of state structures, namely army, secret services, but also government, where currently only one Uzbek is represented (as deputy minister for transportation). Even other 'more cultural' demands regarding higher education in Uzbek language, provision of textbooks and especially language status have over the years become increasingly politicised in Kyrgyzstan, whose authorities, Bhavna Dave notes, have been unable not only to address the question of which language be granted official recognition (and Uzbek has never been on the agenda), but to de-politicise the issue in the way Kazakhstani authorities have done, by declaring the problem solved (2004).

[188]Abidov (1994).
[189]Slovo Kyrgyzstana (2004).

The split (1996-97)

Over the years the programme of the UNCC has remained substantially unchanged. Mr Abidov recalls that the split occurred under his successor, the Osh-based businessman Davron Sabirov. To the great dismay of the Uzbek community, the cultural centre split in two in the mid-1990s. The causes of the rift were personal as well as ideological. As Mr Sabirov himself recalls[190], there were four main reasons for the split. Officially the cause of the split was the question of the denomination of the organization. As soon as Mr Sabirov was elected chairman in 1996, he made it clear that it was his intention to rename the cultural centre in a more distinctive way: Society of Uzbeks (*O'zbeklari Jamiyati*), which would avoid placing the organization in the same "cauldron" together with the national-cultural centres of other minorities. There was clearly about much more than the name. It was a matter of self-perception. Uzbeks have never come to terms with being called diaspora. The fact is, however, that official publications in the country refer to them in this way[191]. Also rejecting labels such as diaspora or minority, the UNCC leadership opted for retaining the original denomination as it fitted into the institutional framework provided by the authorities (the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan), which constituted a forum for policy input and advising the president.

Among the main actors involved in the break up were the businessman Davron Sabirov, elected president of the national-cultural centre in 1996, but "forced to break away" one year later (see below), his predecessor as head of the organization, Adikjan Abidov, who soon thereafter also left the UNCC to join the Party of National Unity and Concord in 2000, and finally, Sabirov's successor, the rector of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek University and Academic Professor Mukhammadjan Mamasaidov. A second thorny issue was the attitude the Uzbek community should adopt towards authorities. One of the main disagreements between Mamasaidov and D. Sabirov concerns the excessively loyalist attitude (to state authorities) of the former, and the confrontational position of the latter. Sabirov's charge is that the pro-government stance of the Uzbek organization has not paid off. While providing

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[190]Interview with Davron Sabirov, 17 July 2003, Osh.

[191]See for example newsagencies (Kabar), newspapers (Slovo Kyrgyzstana), or the house organ of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, Etnicheskii Mir. In the Kyrgyzstani public discourse Uzbeks *are* a diaspora, whether they like it or not (and they do not).

Akaev with the necessary electoral support whenever sought and required, Mamasaidov's centre has obtained nothing in return. The possibility of Uzbeks being granted official status has never been put on the agenda, Uzbek political representation has significantly decreased over the years, and no solution has been found to the questions of education and information in Uzbek language. A third divisive issue was that of the script. Ironically, the language issue did not only divide the state elites, but national minorities as well. The issue does not concern elites only, but the broader Uzbek community. While the question of language status is recognised as being of paramount importance[192], there is no consensus among the Uzbek population as to which script may suit the Uzbek language best. While shifting to Latin would emphasise the cultural ties with neighbouring Uzbekistan, it would isolate Uzbeks from Russians and Kyrgyz who would continue to use Cyrillic. From whichever perspective one looks at this issue, it does not have an easy solution, and certainly none is in sight. Mamasaidov has over the years insisted that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks continue to use of Cyrillic script for two reasons[193]. First, shifting to Latin would be a costly move which neither the Uzbek community alone nor state authorities could ever afford to support given the present economic difficulties. Second, following Uzbekistan's path to Latin script would risk being read as a political move, raising concern or suspicion among ethnic Kyrgyz and the associated potential for destabilization. By contrast, Davron Sabirov has argued for the adoption of the Latin script on the basis that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks would be "cut off from their brothers in Uzbekistan and from their literature. It would be like speaking different languages"[194]. In addition, Sabirov refers to the problem of provision of textbooks as a case for adopting the Latin alphabet. As both the UNCC and Kyrgyzstani authorities face increasing difficulties in providing Uzbek students with the sufficient number of textbooks[195], the only option would be to require local Uzbeks to follow Uzbekistan's script shift, in order to avoid being cut off from the

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[192]See chapter 5.

[193]Ferghana Valley Listserver Archive 'Osh Uzbek newspaper stopped', www.friends-partners.org/lists/ferghana-valley/1999/0169.html.

[194]Interview with Davron Sabirov, 17 July 2003.

[195]Though Mamasaidov claims that 37 textbooks have already been provided by the new CTP and another 150 are scheduled for 2005 (Mamasaidov and Khudaberdiyev, 2003), this still runs short of the requirements of Uzbek schools.

supply of books from the Uzbekistani Ministry of Education[196]. Finally, the relationship with Uzbekistan divided the Uzbek leadership. Sabirov's personal connections on the either side of the border (gas companies in Andijan[197]) played well into the hands of both himself and his political opponent. Uzbekistani authorities never made a secret of their intentions to use gas supplies as a political weapon to "punish" Akaev's perceived weakness in cracking down on Islamic militants. The power and personality struggle ended with Mr Sabirov breaking away (something which many Uzbek now resent and complain about) from the official organization and setting up a parallel cultural centre, under the name he had planned: the more inclusive - at least in his intentions - Society of Uzbeks., founded in 1997.

A two-men-race? The personalization of Uzbek politics (1997-2000)

The competition between the two leaders and the centres they chair has yielded two sets of unhelpful implications for local Uzbek politics. First is the marginalization of other actors and, by extension, of alternative discourses. Uzbek politics appears to have become an *affaire à deux*. The two personalities overshadow the rest. In addition, the way the two centres are led makes any significant challenge or contest for the respective leaderships simply unthinkable for the time being. Elections and routine meetings are held, but no serious chance exists for outsiders or even insiders to mount a challenge. Alisher Sabirov, regarded by many a more effective figure than Mamasaidov, has decided not to challenge the older leader and rather enjoys considerable popularity in the community. Both centres are elitist organizations, strongly personalised and with a pyramidal structure. Mamasaidov and Davron Sabirov represent two very different type of leader: the task-oriented and dull academic, and the maverick people-oriented, charismatic businessman. Though competing in many ways with each other, their leadership appears to have brought the Uzbek community some benefits. The channels through which these benefits have come show the diverse nature of their leadership, the different strategies employed and stances taken vis-à-vis the authorities.

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[196]In an interview held in Tashkent a high official at the Ministry of Higher Education noted that Uzbekistani never ceased supplying textbooks to Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks (June 10, 2003). However, I never found anyone able to confirm this claim among Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

[197]Interview with D. Sabirov, 17 July 2003.

As already noted, Mukhammadjan Mamasaidov's emphasis has been on the higher education sector, where his contribution has been more evident. Professor Mamasaidov is the rector of the Osh-based Kyrgyz-Uzbek University (KUU), a joint project of the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, established in 1997, for which he had strongly lobbied the authorities. The KUU provides tuition in secondary and higher education and is host to more than 14,000 students in 47 subjects[198]. Linked to the UNCC is also the particularly active Uzbek theatre "Babur" (the head of the theatre was the leader of the Osh branch of the UNCC in 2003), the Centre for Textbook Production, a printing house (established in 1998) based at the KUU which seeks to address one of the most pressing concerns of the Uzbek population: the lack of textbooks in Uzbek language.

Mamasaidov's style of leadership can be characterised as task-oriented and he is less interested in playing on the emotions of the rank and file of the Uzbek community, and aimed more at achieving practical results. His main concern is cultural protection and promotion. In particular, he has noted in a recent conference (2003 p.37) that among the key problems affecting local Uzbeks is the lack of access to higher education institutions, which inevitably leads to the absence of specialists among the Uzbek population. In particular, Mamasaidov refers to the necessity of establishing Uzbek branches of Kyrgyzstani higher education institutions, for example the Kyrgyz National University named after J. Balasagyn (ibid.). What Uzbeks resent is the fact that admission exams are often held in Kyrgyz and Russian only. Also, the leader of the UNCC suggests the production of the CTP should be expanded in particular to address the question of the provision of pre-school textbooks (ibid.).

The UNCC is more institutionalised and capillary present across the country (there are no branches in Talas, Ysyk Kul and Naryn provinces, though, given the scarce Uzbek presence there). By contrast the Society of Uzbeks, while having a broadly similar structure (with chair, deputy chair, and a series of councils/Soviets) is by and large dependent on one person: the leader. It is no wonder then, that a lack of attention and involvement by the leader in the activities of the organization has led to paralysis. This stand-still reflects a shift in priorities for Davron Sabirov. As will be

[198]Mamasaidov and Khudayberdiev (2003).

discussed in more detail later in this section, many point to the instrumental nature of the Society of Uzbeks, which has practically been the vehicle of propaganda for Mr Sabirov during the electoral campaign. Once elected, Mezon newspaper ceased its publications, Mezon TV re-organised its schedules and the content of its programmes downplaying the political matters and giving more space to entertainment (Latin American soap operas). While in the end both leaders strive to achieve the same objective (enhancing the political, cultural, and economic conditions of the Uzbek population), they have adopted different emphases and different strategies.

I illustrate this by examining two short texts produced by Professor Mamasaidov for the house publication of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan Etnicheskii Mir (1999) and the transcript of his intervention at a conference on multi-lingual education organized by the Switzerland-based international organization Cimera (2003), in recent years greatly and effectively involved in enhancing the state of education in Kyrgyzstan. A glance at these documents immediately reveals how the Uzbek leadership is still deeply entrenched in a Soviet language:

"During the Soviet times borders were transparent. The achievements of the Soviet period reflected in the culture, mode of life of Kyrgyz and Uzbek people can't be forgotten. Thanks to the Great October Socialist Revolution the Kyrgyz and Uzbek people succeeded in building their states. Since independence inter-state relations have also improved. Cultural and national centres were created in both Republics [Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan] in order to keep their culture and language and to solve their problems. So, a Kyrgyz Diaspora in Uzbekistan has its own Kyrgyz national centre [...]. For Uzbek people living in the territory of Kyrgyzstan all conditions were created for the development of their culture and nation, newspapers in Uzbek, Uzbek musical and dramatic theatres and schools with Uzbek language education. As a good example of the cooperation of both republics can serve the opening of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek University – the University of Friendship"[199].

This enthusiastic tone congratulating the government for its concern for and support of the development of Uzbek language and culture tends to give way to other perspectives when the audience changes. While criticism never makes an appearance and support for President Akaev is re-iterated at every possible juncture, the shortcomings and demands occupy a more central place during the Kurultai. In front of an audience which included local authorities, but was self-evidently mostly

[199]Etnicheskii Mir (1999).

Uzbek, Mamasaidov pointed to some of the issues that have remained un-addressed throughout the whole post-independence period[200]:

Benefiting from the presence of not insignificant personal financial resources, Sabirov's initial steps in Kyrgyzstani politics date back to the 1990 Osh conflict, when he was reported to have crossed the border from Uzbekistan leading a group of Uzbeks willing to defend the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan. One of the founding members of the UNCC in 1990, Sabirov became chair of the organization in 1996 campaigning for the re-naming and repositioning of the organization. Less loyalty to the state, more to the Uzbek people, captures his political orientation. As already noted, Mr. Sabirov's financial resources are considerable. These include not only financial resources. During the elections of 2000 he turned Mezon Tv and newspaper into instrument of personal propaganda, portraying himself as the "authentic representative" of the Uzbek people. In addition, his close personal and business contacts in Andijan allowed him to portray himself as an effective leader when during 1999 and 2000 Uzbekistan regularly cut the gas supply off. Drawing on personal networks he was able to open an informal channel with local Gas companies in Andijan, which allowed him to provide gas supplies again. What is deeply resented by local Kyrgyz is the fact that somehow only Uzbek districts were re-supplied with gas, leaving Kyrgyz ones in the cold. Increasingly critical of both authorities and complacent Uzbek representatives, Sabirov founded his own organization, which many suspected was little more than an additional vehicle of electoral propaganda. As his nationalist rhetoric increased with the approaching of elections, the whole propaganda machine worked at full capacity, with Mezon TV broadcasting electoral slogans in favour of Davron Sabirov. As mentioned in chapter 6, Sabirov's nationalist rhetoric framed Uzbek grievances in confrontational terms and conveyed an image of Uzbeks as victims which eventually paid off by getting him elected, despite trials and re-trials. As many within the Uzbek community suspected, Sabirov's rhetoric had a rationale: personal ambition. This is something which Mr Sabirov himself now openly acknowledges:

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[200]Isakova (2003). Interviews with Ba'rno Isakova, Almaz Kalet, and Adikjan Abidov, who all attended the sessions at the May 2003 Kurultai (June and July 2003, Osh).

"I know I said things that were quite extreme. I made use of populist rhetoric, I acknowledge that. It was done on purpose"[201].

One should distinguish two phases of D. Sabirov's political life: before and after the parliamentary elections of the year 2000. With hindsight, it all made sense. After securing his seat in the national parliament, Sabirov signed a joint declaration with the UNCC in support of Akaev's re-election bid in October 2000. During the following years Mezon newspaper was closed as it probably did not serve its purpose anymore and Mezon TV modified the content of its broadcasts, shifting from political propaganda to Brazilian soap-operas. The construction of a new building for the Society of Uzbeks was never completed and the long announced Kurultai of the SocUz has not been held yet. In short, Sabirov's organization has fallen asleep. While this has certainly been beneficial to the state of inter-ethnic relations, one is left to wonder whether when new parliamentary elections were held in 2005, local Kyrgyzstanis will have to adaot to a new version of Mr. Sabirov's style of campaigning.

Osh vs. Jalalabat?

Following the local government and decentralization reforms implemented in Kyrgyzstan over the last few years, power has been redistributed and the balance of power between centre and regions has shifted towards the latter. Osh's visibility and status in particular have increased due to its upgrading to the status of capital of the south. While what this entails in practice in terms of bargaining power vis-à-vis the centre is still unclear, reforms have certainly enhanced the position of Osh, and Osh-based politicians. Crucially, the reforms have made Osh the privileged interlocutor of the centre. As the editor of the Jalalabat newspaper Tong Batyrjan Gazibayev points out, Jalalabat Uzbeks resent the attention that Osh systematically receives.

"You see, everything is about Osh: Osh the new capital of the south, Osh has the only Uzbek deputies, they have the national leader who is based there, other leaders of the cultural centre there, even the 'other' centre [D. Sabirov's] is there. They take all the decisions there. There are Uzbeks in Jalalabat too! But they do not seem to count".

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[201] Interview with D. Sabirov, 17 July 2003, Osh.

Uzbek politics in Kyrgyzstan has traditionally been dominated by *Oshliklar* (people from Osh). Only recently has the balance of power been challenged by Jalalabat. In fact, there is a sort of ferment that seems to be absent now among Osh Uzbeks, who appeared exhausted in a way (see later on the inertia characterising the Society of Uzbeks in Osh). Two organizations are present in Jalalabat: the local branch of the Uzbek national-cultural centre, headed by the local businessman Kadyrjan Batyrov, and a newly formed political party, the Party of National Unity and Concord, chaired by A. Akbarov. Kadyrjan Batyrov is in many ways very similar to Davron Sabirov, head of the Osh Society of Uzbeks. Batyrov is the head of the Jalalabat branch of the Uzbek national-cultural centre and one of the deputies at national level. Batyrov and D. Sabirov are the closest figures Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks have to charismatic leaders. There is the impression that balance of power within the Uzbek community is gradually shifting from Osh, more content with its newly acquired status of capital of the south (and the subsequent spoils to be distributed), to Jalalabat, excluded from the bargaining game. Though largely critical of Uzbek under-representation, K. Batyrov does not appear intentioned to take a confrontational stance vis-à-vis the authorities, as this is a position which does not pay off. In fact, in a meeting with the author Batyrov emphasised his distance from politics:

"We are not doing politics here [in Jalalabat]. We are not interested [in it]. What we do is protecting Uzbek traditions, language and culture. We do not have political aims".[202]

If Kyrgyzstani politics is characterised by conflicts between clans and personalities, Jalalabat's Uzbek politics is even more so. There is the impression that nothing moves without the approval of Batyrov who has developed a centralised and personalised control of the local cultural centre. This does not suit everyone, as an Uzbek woman in Jalalabat has noted:

"He [Batyrov] thinks that no-one else exists. He establishes his own school, he provides money for it, he chairs the cultural centre, he provides textbooks. Is there anything he can't do? He is like [Turkmenistan's president Saparmurat] Turkmenbashi. He is developing a sort of cult of personality".

[202]Conversation with Kadyrjan Batyrov, Jalalabat 12 July 2003.

Batyrov's position can be illustrated by the document produced by the Kurultai (assembly) held in Jalalabat on 20th July 2002 by the local branch of the national-cultural centre. While the strategy (enhancing visibility and representation of the Uzbek population) is shared overall by all the organizations claiming to represent the Uzbek community, tactics tend to vary. Jalalabat Uzbeks have become increasingly dissatisfied with the official leadership based in Osh, which is perceived as too passive toward the authorities. Continuing with the same tactics, the argument goes, will change nothing. Separatism is strongly rejected and relationships with Uzbekistan vehemently denied. The agenda, however, seems to focus on political issues as well as cultural demands, thereby representing a significant break with the past practices and rhetoric of maintaining a safe distance from politics. "We don't do politics" seems to be the mantra of Uzbek organizations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan alike. Ethnicity is a sensitive issue and a politicisation of the issue can carry unpleasant consequences for the broader community, in case it were perceived to be mobilizing along ethnic lines. While the Jalalabat organization does not intend - or at least, does not seem - to be "going political", more attention has been paid to the question of political marginalization and the under-representation of Uzbeks in power structures.

On 20th July 2002 an all-Uzbek congress (Kurultai) convened in the southern city of Jalalabat as a forum to discuss some of the pressing issues of major concern for the country's Uzbek population. The discussions in the Kurultai resulted in a petition, addressed to President Akaev, containing both political and cultural demands. First, the level of political representation among Uzbeks, which has decreased over the years, was mentioned. While in the first parliamentary assembly after independence ten deputies were Uzbek, in the Jogorku Kenesh elected in 2000 only five Uzbeks sit in the national parliament (between the two chambers). Uzbek frustrations have soared following the publication of the 1999 census which has seen Uzbeks becoming the second largest ethnic group replacing Russians, most of which had left the country soon after the Soviet collapse. This has heightened the sense of marginalization on the one hand, and contextually raised expectations on the other. Though the situation at local level differs from that of the country as a whole, Jalalabat Uzbeks feel particularly under-represented. There are no Uzbek deputies

currently elected to the parliament from the Jalalabat province. Even the Jalalabat-born Alisher Sabirov, a leading figure of the UNCC and intellectual has turned to Osh in order to win a seat in the parliament. The situation appears to be less dramatic at a local level, with Uzbek representatives elected to both city and provincial assemblies. Regardless of the number of deputies, the contentious issue regards the question of the boundaries of the electoral districts, allegedly "corrected" to increase the share of ethnic Kyrgyz, thereby making it virtually impossible for Uzbeks to elect an Uzbek representative (ICG, 2002b).

Equally important in the petition to Akaev are cultural issues. Indeed, the large majority of requests focus on cultural issues. Most significantly, and controversially considering that not all among Uzbeks agree with the idea, is the request that Uzbek be declared an official language. The cultural centre also asked for more space to be conceded to Uzbek language programs on national and regional TV and radio. Currently border regions in the Jalalabat province receive the signal from different Uzbekistani channels (TV-1, Yoshlar Telekanali, Andijan TV, Namangan TV). Unlike Osh, there is no TV channel broadcasting in Uzbek in Jalalabat, and given that state television broadcasts almost exclusively in Russian and/or Kyrgyz, this leaves the Uzbek population with little or no access to Uzek-language information about Kyrgyzstan. A similar situation applies to the printed media. Until Summer 2003, when it was closed due to financial reasons, the newspaper Ferghana was published in two languages, Uzbek and Kyrgyz, by separate groups of journalists. The newspaper *Sosedy* (Neighbours) and the news agency *Fergana.org* represent independent attempts to address issues raised by domestic and international actors.

"Uzbeks are the majority in the south, they live compactly and why are they not allowed to speak their language? We are a titular nation, the second group in the country according to the last census, so why should we not be allowed to speak our own language? Uzbek is not a minority language".

The impression is that Jalalabat Uzbeks are less complacent towards authorities than their kins in Osh. The Jalalabat UNCC, the PNUC – and the Society of Uzbeks in Osh - have not, so far, hijacked the discourse of stability and inter-ethnic harmony imposed as hegemonic on Kyrgyzstani politics. Though Akbarov refers explicitly to

national discrimination when discussing the type of problems faced by local Uzbeks, his voice does not resonate across the whole Ferghana valley.

Osh Uzbeks have adopted a more cautious approach to advancing their demands than their brethren in Jalalabat[203]. The differences per se are no big surprise. Uzbeks tend to have a very localised form of identity based on town/village level alongside Uzbek national consciousness, which explains why, among the other things, Osh and Jalalabat Uzbeks feel at once both the same and different. While Osh Uzbeks side openly with Akaev's administration, Jalalabat Uzbeks appear less enthusiastic about it, which is confirmed by reports that the 2002 Aksy riots saw Jalalabat Uzbeks sympathising with the protesters, whereas the official Osh leadership 'urged' the local population to "stay home" and not to take part in what would be depicted as potentially provocative actions. What seems a fair representation is that local Uzbeks shared the concerns and grievances of southern Kyrgyz, but appeared fearful of the consequences of their actions. This soured the relations between Uzbeks and southern Kyrgyz further, as the latter felt "betrayed" at the last moment:

"Southern Kyrgyz have not forgotten. We agreed, we were all going to Aksy, because the situation is bad for everyone here in the South, whether you are Uzbek, Kyrgyz, that doesn't matter... Uzbeks were marching onto Aksy already and they gave up at the last moment. You see, the north has managed to split the south. By dividing us, they manage to retain their control and leverage".

The boundaries of electoral districts have recently undergone "adjustments", which many among the local population have perceived as detrimental to various ethnic communities. Uzbeks emphasise the deliberate anti-Uzbek nature of such policies:

"They are doing this because they do not want more Uzbeks, especially not in Jalalabat. They are afraid of having more Uzbeks in the parliament, they are splitting up the districts where Uzbeks form a majority so that Kyrgyz will control them."

Kyrgyz on the other, note that in the end redrawing electoral districts damages everyone, not only Uzbeks:

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[203] A recent ICG report (2002c p.19) also confirms that Jalalabat Uzbeks have been more "forthright in asserting their political agenda".

"That has nothing to do with ethnicity. It is political. According to the new electoral districts, neither Uzbeks or Kyrgyz would form a firm majority. This would allow the centre to control the districts. It is part of a design of the north to split the south in two so that it can control it easily and more effectively". Uzbeks are part of this design". "At least they are co-opted, they are made to believe that they are important and that the administration cares about them".

7.2.2. Leadership deficit in Tajikistan

As noted in the previous section the Uzbek organization's strategy develops along two tracks: political and cultural. The former includes "achievement of political stability, protection of rights and interests of Uzbeks and Uzbek-speaking population [this presumably includes groups like Lakay, Barlos and others, who refuse to call themselves Uzbeks], the strengthening of the centuries-old friendship between Tajiks and Uzbeks, promotion of ideas and principles of humanism, internationalism and democracy"[204]. These are extremely broad principles and any individual with common sense would without hesitation subscribe to them. How they are carried out in practice is quite another matter and this is where rifts within the Uzbek community appear. The rationale of the organization is primarily cultural (promotion and preservation of Uzbek culture and traditions), although this does not preclude an increase in activities during electoral campaigns (similarly to the cultural centres in Kyrgyzstan). The "society" presents its candidates to the local (city and provincial) and national assemblies, and since independence thirteen of its members have been elected to the national parliament (only one Uzbek candidate sits in the current parliament, a representative from Nau), where the number of Uzbek representatives has steadily decreased over the years. On a cultural level the organization seeks to lobby authorities for the opening of more Uzbek schools (though this is an issue not exclusively pertaining the Uzbek community), and especially for the provision of textbooks.

"That of textbooks is an issue of paramount importance for us. How can we teach our children our language if we do not have books? We need the state to provide us with textbooks or to allow us to open a printing house to publish them. We do not have money for it, so the state has to do it. We are citizens of Tajikistan too, and we have the same rights. Besides, how can Uzbeks stay without their language?"

[204]Interviews with members of the Society of Uzbeks (Khujand, August 2003).

Rather than inspiring potential followers and framing issues in a way that could mobilise them, the organization's leadership appeared more concerned with two other questions: self-preservation and open support of the presidential administration. The fact that for the entire tenure of his office, Mr Sattarov's working place was in the same building as the Ministry of Foreign affairs in Dushanbe certainly did not help convey an image of autonomy from the administration. Although the current leaders strive to portray themselves as the true representatives of the Uzbek community, their legitimacy is far from quietly accepted.

If publicly there is no open contestation of leadership authority or legitimacy, privately things are different. The widespread perception is that the leadership's legitimacy derives from above (being an instrument of control of the community), rather than from the below (as expression of the Uzbek community). The common understanding between the organization and state leaders and local authorities stems from a common background of involvement in the communist youth organization (Komsomol'). These types of connections from the past, personal as well as political (the two intertwine), continue to exert a crucial influence on today's political games.

Leaders and organization activists belong to the same generation and are predominantly male. As Tajikistani society is more traditional than Kyrgyzstan's, women, Tajik and Uzbek alike, tend to be confined to more peripheral roles in public life. This is certainly changing, especially in non-governmental organizations, but one can not help noticing the gender imbalance in public life. A common past in the Komsomol' has created bonds and mindsets which span across regional and ethnic lines, shaping the way leaders and elites relate to each other. More often than not, this occurs in a co-operative manner. Unsurprisingly, the few active women also have a history of being active members and leaders in this organization. Similarly to the case of Kyrgyzstan, both organization and leadership in Tajikistan are elitist and more oriented to monopolising the discourse than openly discussing Uzbek demands and grievances, let alone critically assessing what strategies and tactics may be more appropriate to pursue Uzbek interests.

The outcome in Tajikistan is a condition of hegemony of a "phantom leadership". The Uzbek official leadership's relation to the state can be easily and

concisely summarised as one of "strong support for the administration". One should note however that Uzbek support for the Rakhmonov administration appears to be eroding[205] and should therefore not be taken for granted. During the civil war, Uzbeks tilted towards the Kulyabi-Leninabadi faction (Horsman, 1999b). This was essentially due to two reasons. On the one hand the widespread assessment from the Uzbek population was that support for the ruling elite would ensure that privileges and benefits acquired during the Soviet era would continue. On the other, the Tajik opposition – despite proclaiming itself as Islamic (hence, non national) was perceived by the Uzbek community as more nationalist in orientation than the Soviet faction, which had its ideological roots in Soviet internationalism and not in Tajik nationalism. In fact the so-called Tajik opposition also included more secular and more nationalist-oriented intellectuals, and not just Islamic elements. In brief, Uzbeks feared that a victory for the Tajik opposition would translate into a marginalization of non-Tajiks from public life[206].

The absence of credible leaders (or the dearth of leaders tout court) inevitably affects the strategy used to deal with state authorities. As already mentioned, the Uzbek organization has virtually imploded. It still formally occupies a seat in the Council gathering all minority groups in Dushanbe, though no one operates there in a practical sense. The organization is still officially awaiting the election of a new leader and the organization of a formal assembly (Kurultai) which would elect the new chair. However, the post has been vacant since 2000, when the then leader Q. Sattarov left office to move to a more lucrative position as advisor to the OSCE. In addition, Sattarov's leadership is not remembered for its strong vision or activity, though the legacy of Sattarov's departure has been a de facto fragmentation of the organization along regional lines[207].

A lack of funding is another hindrance to the activities of the organization. As the organization is not funded from the state, it relies on the contributions of private individuals. It can certainly be the case that rather than a lack of interest in politics, businessmen may simply not find themselves adequately represented by the available

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[205]And as recent ICG reports underline, this erosion of support for Tajikistan's leadership seems to be extending to the society at large, regardless of both ethnic or regional affiliations.

[206]Interview with the deputy leader of the Party of Islamic Renaissance in Dushanbe (18 August 2003) and the leader for the Sughd province (Khujand, 22 August 2003).

[207]Interview with leading members of the Society of Uzbeks in Khujand (August, 2003).

organizations, which would then explain their current political apathy and their restraint in becoming involved in public activities. There is reason to believe, however, that while this factor can play a role, a self-imposed distance from public affairs follows a pattern of privileging private business to public employment and engagement by the Uzbek population. This lack of funding eventually limits the range of events and activities that can be organized. In practice this means that the community is mobilized for popular events, such as national or religious holidays, or concerts. Concerts by the well known Uzbekistani singer Yulduz Usmanova[208] draw large crowds and are enjoyed immensely by the local community. That the community participates en masse in this type of event should not lead anyone to assume the existence of strong support for the organization.

7.3. Civil society: An alternative voice for Uzbeks?

Debates, discourse, as well as of course activities about civil society and democracy promotion have spread in Central Asia over recent years. This is not the place to discuss the heuristic usefulness of the concept or even the applicability to the Central Asian context, or the implications of foreign donors for the creation of civil society in the two cases under investigation[209]. A discussion of the impact of the action of foreign donors on the domestic scene and state-society relations lies outside the scope of this research, as noted in chapter 1. Instead, what this section aims to achieve, is to go beyond the voice of official organizations and present alternative voices. These are voices of actors who because of the monopoly of resources by official organizations, cannot have their voice heard because of lack of means (channels) to do so. And in some cases they do not even aspire to.

The section is structured as follows. First I briefly discuss the concept of civil society, particularly with regard to the Central Asian context and look at some of the problematics that NGOs have encountered in their activities in the region. I then introduce the voices of local Uzbeks who to different extents have become involved in civil society. The portrait that will emerge will be multi-faceted. The group, in

[208]Anon (2004). Yulduz Usmonova is among the most popular singer and actually show-woman in Central Asia, whose fame and popularity go well beyond the borders of Uzbekistan where she is based. Despite singing in Uzbek, her appeal spans across ethnic lines, especially in ethnically mixed areas such as the valleys of Zarafshan, Hissar, and Ferghana.

[209]On this see Jones Luong and Weinthal (1999), McMann (2004), Roy (2005).

fact, is far from homogenous, both in composition and in terms of the agenda. What the various individuals share is the refusal to be associated closely with the state. Finally, some speculative ideas on the participation of ethnic minorities in civil society are advanced.

Civil society, Olivier Roy argues, consists of "networks of free citizens, such as associations, unions, political parties and NGOs, which establish a political space as a prerequisite for building democracy and a state of law" (2005 p.1004). As John Anderson underlines (2000 p.77), the debate about civil society has moved beyond simplistic accounts that located it in "a distinctive realm intermediate between state and citizen". Most authors now accept the interdependence of the three spheres: state, citizens, and civil society.

There are a series of problems that have emerged over the years with regard to civil society promotion, the applicability of the concept, and the role of context (the Soviet legacy in particular) in Central Asia. A particular type of civil society promotion, most notably conflict prevention, has turned into a sort of industry in Central Asia. Not only have western tools and conceptualization been imported to the region without paying attention to the historical context and the actual actors present in loco (Megoran, 2005; Roy, 2005), but there seems to be no coherent strategy in terms of promotion of civil society in Central Asia at all. Problems include the decline in political activism in favour of emphasis on education and grant applications (Jones Luong and Weinthal, 1999), the extent of local NGOs' dependency on the state and the risk of losing autonomy from it (McMann, 2004), and the proliferation of organizations to the detriment of their qualitative significance (Wiktorowicz, 2001). While all of the above apply to some extent to the Central Asian context, Roy's thesis that involvement of foreign actors may ultimately lead to "internal brain drain effects" (2005 p.1009) well captures the situation of civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Roy warns against the prospect of "creating some sort of artificial reserve for a new endangered species: the democratic intellectual or the independent free woman, who may ultimately find a safer and better position by becoming a development professional, with more ties and links with western institutions than with his or her own country, leading sometimes to exile" (ibid., p.1010).

This happens because Uzbek cultural organizations, which are by no means exhaustive of the positions of the Uzbek community in either state, operate as microcosms of repression by monopolising the access to state attention and (limited) resources and de facto preventing other actors – potential challengers – from entering the political arena. In both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan there are voices which remain unheard, because of lack of means for airing them or because those actors are not keen on becoming more closely involved in and exposed to the political struggle. Hereafter I illustrate the (com)positions of three groups which tend to dissociate themselves very strongly from the two official organizations: Uzbek women, young male intellectuals, and local journalists working as "local experts" and consultants to NGOs and IGOs.

Uzbek women appear particularly active in civil society in Kyrgyzstan. By Uzbek women I do not refer to a discrete group: they do not constitute a cohesive social group or coalesce around one organization. Many among them work as journalists for independent newspapers, but also occupy leading positions in local NGOs, in the judiciary, or as private businesswomen. The group appears particularly lively, especially when compared with the static male-dominated official organizations. When I asked Aziza Yo'ldasheva, for example, a successful businesswoman in Osh, whether she thought Uzbeks were passive or apathetic, she replied by emphasising that:

"I do not think Uzbeks are passive. You can find Uzbeks at any level in Osh. Of course, they are not many, but if you think that the chair of the Osh Regional Parliament is Uzbek [Isabaeev], the speaker of the city parliament is Uzbek [Azimov], the rector of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek University is Uzbek, then you see that Uzbeks are more or less everywhere".

However, she added, while representation per se does not constitute a problem, Uzbeks do not occupy key positions endowed with decision-making power:

"Uzbeks are not in positions of power, that is the problem. I do not feel any pressure, though. If you are capable and show initiative, no-one will bother you then, whether you are Uzbek, Kyrgyz, man or woman. If you show initiative, you can succeed".

This is mainly due, she pointed out, to the self-referential nature of Uzbek organizations, who are mainly concerned with showing how close they are to state authorities without actually benefiting from this closeness. Though she made clear that becoming the leader of an Uzbek organization did not rank high in her priorities and that she was content with her own work at a local NGO (alongside her private business), Aziza-opa clearly referred to the more general condition of Uzbek women, who are often limited by the constraining psychological barriers of traditional Uzbek mahallas (neighbourhood communities). Other Uzbek women, like Aziza-opa (same name) and Ba'rno-opa, both employed in the local judiciary in Osh as public defendants share similar views. They note how the number of Uzbeks working in the judiciary is low, but emphasise that no-one has given them any problem, either as women or as Uzbek.

"I am interested in politics and I follow current affairs. I have always done since when I was a leader in the Komsomol. But look at the two organizations in Osh: they talk and talk between themselves, but... who is listening? They are very far from the community, they do not represent their needs or demands".

In general, this group tends to show more optimism in terms of the prospects for Uzbek involvement in public life. If anything, they tend to be more critical of the constraints coming from within the Uzbek community. In this regard they frequently note how the current leadership is totally self-referential, with the goal of preserving its privileged status, and subsequently marginalising any possible challengers.

A second social group that has had its voice marginalised by the hegemony of the two Uzbek organizations is that comprising "more nationalist-oriented intellectuals" and includes cultural elites, namely academics and students. In Kyrgyzstan the positions of this group overlapped with those advocated by Mr. Davron Sabirov before being the 2000 elections. Following his moderation, this group has found itself essentially "without voice". Although no-one openly goes as far as to advance autonomist or even separatist claims, there seems to be no love lost for either Kyrgyzstan's leadership or Uzbekistan's leadership. Typically this group involves academics and students at Osh State University's Pedagogical and Uzbek Philology Departments, arguably the departments where the number of Uzbek

students is highest. The issues on the agenda are generally the same as those of any other group. The tone, however, is remarkably different and decisively more confrontational:

"Mamasaidov [the UNCC leader] is a Kyrgyz. He is not Uzbek. Why does a Kyrgyz lead an Uzbek organization? Of course we can't expect anything from him".

This way of dismissing the political opponent by depicting him as the "ethnic other" is strikingly similar to the approach of an analogously nationalist fringe of intellectuals in northern Tajikistan. This group does not plan to enter the political arena, and given their position it would not be difficult to envisage problems both in registering their candidates and during the electoral campaign (see events during Sabirov's campaign in 2000). However, it would be incorrect to dismiss this group as the typical fifth column of a kin state. Komil, a young graduate from Osh University and local journalist, makes no secret of his distaste for Uzbekistan's President Karimov's policies. It is noteworthy to observe that while Akaev tends to be referred to as weak, comments are not so magnanimous when it comes to Uzbekistan's president. Despite the frequent reference to the common cultural ties existing between Uzbeks on either side of the border, no sign of separatism or even autonomism has emerged.

A similar group of peoples is also present in Tajikistan. This group also comprises members of the local cultural elites Though it would be incorrect to consider this as a cohesive, let alone organized or institutionalised, group, it resembles a small network of like-minded people who tend to meet regularly and maintain their own internal dynamic. The grouping is informal as there is no official leader nor any sign of structure, hence it is difficult to assess its size or even its broader impact on Uzbeks outwith the main urban centre of Khujand. They tend not to express their critical views openly when in public[210] and almost always try to arrange separate meetings where one condition is met: that the interviewer alone is

[210]I noticed this when visiting a local NGO in Khujand, where some respondents had no hesitation to comment publicly in a common room. Others, namely those voicing more critical views, asked for separate meetings. While it may well be the case that there were other potential respondents who simply did not wish to be identified or contacted and therefore did not ask for separate meetings and kept aside, the number of individuals (of Uzbek nationality) usually present did not allow me to divide the group further.

present. Conversations, in the form of spontaneously organised focus groups, spanned across a wide range of topics, from the role of Uzbekistan, to that of Uzbeks in Tajikistan.

Members from this group are very critical of the current Uzbek leadership and official representatives in general, which they see as "feeble, weak, and complacent with authorities". They are seen as "too loyal and puppets in the hands of the administration" and, above all, "largely ineffective". The closeness of "self-proclaimed Uzbek leaders" to state authorities has brought no benefit to the community, the argument goes. In essence the official representatives of the Uzbek community are regarded as contrary to Uzbek interests because "they are not really Uzbek". Hence they should be replaced.

In this regard there is a worrisome practice among members of this group toward constructing the political opponent as an ethnic other. Depicting political opponents in ethnic terms excludes them from the Uzbek community and questions their legitimacy as representatives. What this marginal group seems to be engaged in is building a stereotype of the current Uzbek representatives as "non Uzbek", "selling out Uzbek interests to state authorities".

"[The current chair of the Sughd branch of the Society of Uzbeks] Pulatov is not really Uzbek, you know. He is Tajik. His sons are all married to Tajik girls".

This type of comments involves even deputies at Parliament in Dushanbe. Asked to comment on the effectiveness of Uzbek deputies:

"[Deputy to the Majlisi Oli from the town of Nau] Zulfiya Isakova? We are not going to say anything about her [showing contempt]! Besides, she is not Uzbek at all!"

The strategy of this group is not openly confrontational, as they maintain a low profile, arguably in order to avoid being questioned by authorities. But the orientation remains strongly critical of the attitude of both state authorities and official Uzbek organizations. It is difficult to predict how the situation will evolve, especially if core demands are not addressed, but for the time being this group

constitutes a very peripheral voice among Uzbeks and its positions do not seem to be widespread shared throughout the larger Uzbek community.

A third and final group remained on the fringes of the debate within the Uzbek community is the one situated somewhere in the middle between the members of the official organization and the radical intellectuals. I illustrate the dynamics, strategies and beliefs of this group by referring to Mirzo Khakim, editor of the Uzbek newspaper *Tong* (Dawn) in Khujand, as I think he embodies well the positions and dynamics of this emerging group of Uzbeks who occupy a sort of middle ground between those harshly critical of the authorities and whose who instead co-operate closely with them. Mirzo-aka shows no interest whatsoever in active political life:

"What does the 'Society' do? Nothing. They publish one newspaper [Kadriyat]. And do you know who reads that newspaper? No-one, because it is boring. It has four pages, but there is nothing to read. And this is what they do. They say: oh, Uzbeks have no newspapers, there is an information void, they speak and speak, but all they do is publishing four boring pages. It is true that there is no information available in Uzbek. But if you want Uzbeks to read, then give them something interesting, at least!"[211]

Mirzo-aka tends to avoid openly discussing state policy and focuses mostly on the lack of initiative (*inertiya*) shown from the Uzbek community. The case of Mirzo-aka and Tong is also representative of the complexities and contradictions associated with the sudden arrival of NGOs (and funding, often erroneously assumed to be unlimited) in a society where previously there were none. It poses the problem of the agenda of such organizations and the rising expectations of some domestic groups who see in the presence of foreign donors a sort of heavenly manna. These contradictions are present even in the case of Tong, where conversations with Mirzo-aka seem to suggest rising expectations from such donors, contributing to the blurring of boundaries between donors, local organizations, entire communities, and international organizations such as the OSCE that are not donors, but are nevertheless perceived as such.

This sub-group of the Uzbek elite is developing into the closest thing Tajikistani Uzbeks may have to a lobby. While it may not lobby the ultimate

[211]Interviews with Mirzo Hakim, Khujand, August 2003.

decision-maker (the Tajikistani authorities), it does have close relationships with a wide range of international organizations, which in turn have a certain degree of leverage on the central government. Raising demands and concerns at the local field office of the OSCE about the conditions of the Uzbek community is considered as an effective way to get one's voice to reach the government's ear via a third and more influential party. Overall, the position of this group is that of a careful balance between mild criticism of the authorities (in order to avoid being labelled as nationalist) and the necessity of working together with them.

Overall there seems to be a trade-off between occupational niches and marginal political influence. Not everyone within the Uzbek community in Tajikistan (though this by and large applies to Kyrgyzstan too) are interested in political affairs or in cultural issues. Quite the contrary: the case of the Uzbek economic elite to which Olimov and Olimova refer to in a study on ethnic relations and local self-government in Tajikistan (2002) illustrates well the situation of that part of the Uzbek population that is more interested in integrating into the new economic system being formed than getting involved in politics, in which they show little interest or place little trust. Olimov and Olimova emphasise how Uzbeks have overall adapted well to the new economic situation, relying less on the state for help and support, being more private business oriented, in fact "better than any other ethnic group" in the country (2002 p.249). This can be ascribed to their minimal dependence on the state, which has made the Soviet collapse to some extent "less painful". Olimov and Olimova explain Uzbek economic "independence" by referring to the pecularities of the social structure of Uzbek communities (based, like the Tajik ones, on the avlod structure, the avlod being the extended patriarchal family possessing a considerable degree of autonomy and acting like a cushion or social parachute to the Soviet collapse) and especially the presence of economic and occupational niches (2002 p.249). Community and tribe also helped soften the drop in living standards (ibid., p.250). Olimov and Olimova argue that the Uzbek economic elite gained strength, though this was accompanied by an almost simultaneous drop in political prospects (ibid., p.250; see also Atkin, 1997). The precarious economic situation of the country, where more than 80% of the population lives below the poverty level, concerns the whole populace regardless of ethnic belonging. The "real problem is

poverty, how to get to the end of the day and feed your family". While this is undoubtedly true, one may wonder whether perceptions of economic disadvantage may be interpreted or construed in ethnic terms. This does not appear to be the case. Even in cases where respondents refer to political difficulties or "unofficial discrimination" in the work place (the position being given to a Tajik rather than someone from a minority group), this does not appear to fuel ethnic resentment. Comments such as "the situation is difficult for all, Uzbeks, Tajiks, everyone" are common. A preference for economic activities over political careers or engagement among Tajikistani Uzbeks is to some extent reminiscent of the situation in Kyrgyzstan, where Uzbeks are also very active in the trade and retail sectors. In Tajikistan, however, this has been to the detriment of political influence and participation of the Uzbek population (Olimov and Olimova). Being cut off from politics has significantly impacted on Uzbek interest in it.

"Why wasting your time if the highest you can get is a deputy position?" "There is no point in working for the administration, the salary is very low, better to set up your own business or work in the bazaar, you have better chances [to improve economic conditions]".

This section has shown that in both countries there is an embryonic space outside state reach and control, where individuals – Uzbeks in this case – who do not wish to work within or with the state have the possibility to do so. There is something beyond officialdom. What matters then is understanding the implications of this choice. Are Uzbeks becoming involved in civil society in order to challenge the existing regime (using NGOs as a Trojan horse) or, as it seems the case, they view it as a vehicle for a less constrained (by the state) social participation?

7.4. Of followers and leaders: The un-coupling of elites and rank and file

What do the rank and file and ordinary Uzbeks think of "their" leaders? Do they share their strategy and goals? This is a crucial question because of the commonly held assumption that Uzbeks show a deferential attitude towards authority (*hurmat*) and are a particularly disciplined and conservative people. The rank and file of the Uzbek community feel increasingly distant from the group's leadership. Ironically, the distance in some instances appears so huge that it seems that the two groups,

leaders and rank and file, ignore each other's existence. According to ordinary Uzbeks, the state and the leaders appear particularly distant from the needs of the community:

"They remember of us only before elections". "When they need your vote, then they come out and look for you and they notice that you exist". "They say they care about ordinary Uzbeks, how they live, and about their problems, but then they only come and listen during elections". "They come to the mahalla, they speak to the elders, organize a meeting, make promise and make sure they get their votes. After the elections, they forget about us again".

Discussing the question of unity (of the Uzbek leadership and of the Uzbek community in general) and how it is perceived by ordinary Uzbeks appears particularly appropriate to show the dynamics internal to the Uzbek community and the potential for mobilization. In the end, if successful mobilization is to take place, masses will have to be included and in order to be included they have to feel connected to their leaders[212]. So the fundamental question appears to be: would ordinary Uzbeks be willing to mobilize, after all? And would they follow the current leadership? What emerges from conversations with ordinary Uzbeks is a sense of progressive "un-coupling" between ordinary people and the elites.

Uzbek leaders, where available, are seen as too closely co-operative with the state authorities. The perception of state institutions as ineffectual and un-democratic tends therefore to extend to whoever is seen as cooperating too closely with them. The sharp demise of the official Uzbek organizations has certainly not enhanced the opinions ordinary Uzbeks may have of them. Official organizations are not just seen as ineffective, but also as redundant. Ordinary Uzbeks lament the fact that they are given leaders which they did not choose.

"Who chose them? They chose themselves!" "Whom do they represent?" "They do not listen to ordinary people, they do not know what people need, they are only interested in their status [as official leaders]".

Leaders and organizations by extension are seen as self-referential power groups, who owe their legitimacy more to the state administration than the community of

[212]For a similar argument on the centrality of rank and file to the mobilizational process see Gorenburg (2003).

whose interests they are allegedly representing. It is noteworthy to point out that while some respondents question the usefulness or efficacy of the Uzbek organization, many among them are not even aware of the existence of such an organization.

7.4.1. Tajikistan

As previously noted, the situation in Tajikistan is one of an absence of leadership. However, very few are nostalgic for the past leader of the Society of Uzbeks Qurban Sattarov:

"He left the organization to work for the OSCE"[213]. "Good for him, he gets paid now, but who do we have now in Dushanbe?"

The problem then does not lie with a nostalgia for an inspirational leader (as Sattarov in fact was not), but in the absence of a figure connecting the regional branches and guiding the Uzbek community.

"Who stands up for Uzbeks? No-one. There is no leader". 'Uzbeks are passive because they have no leaders. They are like the Russian bear. They are sleeping now that they are without leaders. Better not to wake the bear up'.

The question of who may lead the community and especially who "may stand up to Dushanbe" raises serious concerns among ordinary Uzbeks. This should not be seen as a sign that Uzbeks may be waiting for a "khan" to mobilize the entire community or as a sign of dissatisfaction with the situation. Grievances do not translate automatically into political action. Neither should one read in this a strong support for the opposition, as this is not the case.

Participation in political and public life appears low among Uzbeks. As the tables below show, only one in five respondents is a member of a political party. Of the thirty-eight respondents who acknowledged a party affiliation, about a half did not wish to share this information. Among the remaining respondents, the ruling People's Democratic Party appeared as the most popular, followed by the

[213]Sattarov has been working as 'expert' for the Dushanbe office of the OSCE since the mid-1990s.

Communist Party. In no instance did the respondent join the party of choice on ethnic grounds. No political party is perceived as specifically addressing ethnic issues, but then again inter-ethnic relations do not rank high among state priorities.

Table 7.2 Are you a member of a political party? If so, which one?

Yes	21.7%
No	78.3%

Table 7.3 Party affiliation

Party name	No.
Democratic Party	1
Communist Party	7
People's Democratic Party	12
Socialist Party	1
No answer	17

I then investigated whether the candidate's ethnicity is considered a relevant factor when it comes to elections. With the exception of a very marginal percentage (3.7%) this did not appear to be the case (as in the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks). Neither did respondents look at the candidate's party belonging, which is deemed as largely irrelevant (also 3.7%). Quite surprising was the finding that voters did not look for candidates from the same region (*zemlyachestvo*). This is surprising because it questions the so far dominant view that territorial affiliations rather than political ones determine voting behaviour and political support. On the basis of the survey two in three respondents indicated professional qualities *delovoye kachestvo*) as the main factor their choice. Whether the candidate was Tajik, Uzbek or other, did not seem to matter, which sets the case of Tajikistani Uzbeks in striking contrast to that of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks for whom a candidate's ethnicity plays a great role, though not officially, where the rhetoric of professional quality over ethnicity is strongly emphasised.

Table 7.4 What factors determine your voting behaviour?

Reason	
Nationality	3.7
Zemlyachestvo	8.2
Professional quality	64.2
Political affiliation	3.7
Don't know	18.7

Participation in events organised by the local cultural organization is higher. This should not lead one to conclude, however, that participation in public events such as concerts or Navruz (lunar new year) are signs of support for or approval of the organization's handling of other issues in the public arena. As I did not distinguish between events organized for the community at large (concerts) or for activists only (periodical meetings) in the survey, data can be partially misleading and one should therefore be cautious in inferring level of support for the cultural organization from what may be more aptly defined as participation in the events organized by it. About three in five respondents attend events or activities organized by the Uzbek society on a regular basis. A significant segment of the sample does not appear to be involved in any such activities at all (28.9% of the sample hardly ever takes part to them). The reasons for this are many-fold.

Table 7.5 How often do you take part to the activities organized by the local Uzbek cultural organization?

	Tajikistan
Always	37.5
Sometimes	23.4
Rarely	10.2
Hardly ever	28.9

On the one hand is the wish, rather widespread, not to be associated with the official organization, seen as the "longa manus" of the authorities to control more than represent the Uzbek community. In addition, the very existence of an Uzbek cultural organization is known to few, and among ordinary people in particular, many are not aware of it. Nor do they need to be, as they have other priorities, as respondents themselves point out.

"People here have other problems other than what this Society of Uzbeks does. Parents need to look after their children, work and buy food. They do not have time for this kind of things".

On the other hand what emerges is the impression that ordinary Uzbeks do not feel the need for this type of organization. This is not so much for its perceived inefficacy (this appears of little relevance, given that all public institutions are seen in the same light), but due to doubts concerning its very use and purpose. I then planned to understand the attitudes towards this organization: why people decided to join it, whereas others did not and did not intend to.

Table 7.6 Why did you decide to join it?

	%
Duty of every Uzbek	61.6
To fight discrimination	6.9
To improve conditions of Uzbeks	26.9
Other	14.6

Table 7.7 What is the function of Uzbek cultural organizations?

	%
Essential part of the life of every ethno-national community	51.6
Avoiding national discrimination	6.9
Improving conditions of the Uzbek community	26.9
Other	15.6

In general Uzbeks show a remarkable scepticism with regard to the usefulness of cultural organizations. When asked to indicate the function this type of organization plays or should play, respondents including leading members of such organizations, showed hesitation and trouble in providing a justification for the existence of these types of organizations. While a small minority see cultural centres as a means to prevent national discrimination (6.9%) or to improve the social and cultural conditions of the Uzbek community (26.9%), about one in two respondents (51.6%) considered them an "essential part of the life of every ethno-national community". What this means in practice was not only unclear to me, but to respondents themselves as well!

The impression left is that although there is a growing awareness that perhaps alternative means of advancing the community's interests should be researched and developed, for the time being cultural organizations are still very much taken for granted. This also hints at the fact that most people wonder whether there is any purpose at all in having this type of organization, particularly given their close ties to

state authorities. This is the way it has been so far, and no-one sees why the situation should change, regardless of the fact that very few perceive them as effective. This confirms the determinant of Uzbeks' passivity, as indicated by respondents themselves: the social conservatism of the Uzbek people.

Despite the officially recognised aim of representing Uzbeks and Uzbek interests, very few among respondents (indeed hardly anyone) would indicate this as the authentic rationale of the organization. While it is unsurprising that the leaders of such organizations tend to depict themselves as representatives of the Uzbek people, Uzbeks themselves do not associate themselves too closely with official cultural organizations. There are different reasons for this.

In fact, there is a significant section of the population that openly questions their purpose. This does not mean that the very same individuals would be ready to set up a separate organization. However it must be noted that no one wants to be seen as a cause of divisiveness and conflict, even if only political. Open disagreement is not encouraged – though this does not mean debate does not take place. Others question instead the very existence of this type of organization:

"We don't need cultural centres. We are not a diaspora! Small ethnic groups, like Germans or Koreans need them. They are few and these organizations can help them safeguard their traditions and their language. What do we need these for? We are not a minority, we are a majority. Here everyone speaks Uzbek. Cultural centres are not for us, they are for diasporas".

I found that Tajikistani Uzbeks do not feel the need for an organization to explicitly represent them, essentially because they do not perceive ethnicity as a relevant cleavage, as has been constantly emphasised. In addition, if an organization is required at all, it need not be a cultural centre as this type of organization is associated with smaller groups and having an Uzbek cultural centre is interpreted as a sign that Tajikistani authorities understand the place of Uzbeks in the same way as they see Koreans, Poles, or even Russians; as diasporas, a category which Uzbeks reject in toto.

Alongside the scarce political representation of the Uzbek community at a national level (one deputy in the parliament, no Uzbeks in key administrative positions, a few deputies to the local governors), Uzbeks also show a low level of

participation to public life and interest in political affairs. This can be ascribed to different sets of factors: the lack of possibilities for channelling and airing demands can certainly lead the population to apathy by fuelling the perception that their 'voices will never be heard anyway'. Alternatively, political insulation can be a choice rather than an imposed condition (see a previous section on the behaviour of economic elites). Remarkably, the large majority of Uzbek respondents pointed to one specific reason explaining what they described as passivity of the Uzbek people, the cause being Uzbeks themselves (!).

Perceptions of efficacy of Uzbek organizations

Interviews, focus groups, and survey data with Uzbeks who are *not* actively involved with the activities of the cultural organizations but have a broad interest in the affairs of the (Uzbek) community, all seem to suggest that outside the circle of members, Uzbek organizations are not perceived as effective. Moreover their rationale is openly questioned. Although the national-cultural centre claims to represent and promote Uzbek interests, this claim is shared by very few respondents.

Only one respondent in ten in Kyrgyzstan (10.1%) or even less (6.8%) in Tajikistan thought that it is the duty of national cultural organizations to actively promote and defend Uzbek interests. About half of the respondents considered this (defense and promotion of Uzbek interests) to be a task/duty of state institutions (table 5.10). A further 20% in Kyrgyzstan and approximately 28% in Tajikistan expected all citizens of the country where they live to defend Uzbek interests, not so much because of their peculiarity or of their being Uzbek, but as equal citizens of Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan (this seems to be consistent with other findings on group self-definition, see chapter 4).

It is interesting to note that in some cases criticism stems from a real disagreement over what the organization represents and does. In other cases, however, it is its closeness to power (without any perceived positive implication) that causes concern and frustration. This is not just a problem for the organization led by Professor Mamasaidov, although this organization does appear to be a preferred target of criticism given its close relation with the state administration and the

president in particular. In fact, even Davron Sabirov's organization is the target of popular criticism:

"Look at what [Davron] Sabirov does: he goes to Amir Temur [a completely Uzbek district at the periphery of Osh, arguably the poorest area in town], he brings a bus there and takes people to vote]. Who do you think they vote for?" "He only cares about his personal interest: he founded his own TV and newspaper [Mezon TV and Mezon] and after being elected he shut his own newspaper because he did not need it anymore".

These comments build on those of a number of other respondents who showed no awareness of the existence of Uzbek organizations, and thought than when I asked them about the O'zbeklar Jamiyati I actually meant the whole Uzbek community (*obshchina*). It appears that the claims from the UNCC especially to represent the whole Uzbek population are at best un-substantiated as they have failed to make the organization visible (let alone popular) with the broader public and potential followers. As will be shown in the final section, this is not necessarily contradictory, as representativeness was never actually meant to be the goal of the organization, as a rather top-down structure best reflects its nature.

In the case of Tajikistan only one in three respondents considers the Society of Uzbeks as either effective or very effective (35%). About two in five respondents (41.7%) consider it 'not very effective'. In the case of Kyrgyzstan perceptions were investigated with respect to the two competing organizations operating in the country (the Society of Uzbeks is based in Osh only, whereas the UNCC has a capillary presence in most province. Both organizations are perceived as not very effective by about half the respondents (49.6% in the case of UNCC, and 47.8% for Society of Uzbeks). About one in four respondents considers the national-cultural centre as effective or very effective.

Table 7.8 How effective is the UNCC in dealing with Uzbek-related issues?

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Very effective	4.3	0.8
Effective	20.0	34.2
Not very effective	49.6	41.7
Don't know	26.1	24.2

Table 7.9 How effective is the Society of Uzbeks in dealing with Uzbek-related issues (Kyrgyzstan only)?

	Kyrgyzstan
Very effective	7.1
Effective	27.4
Not very effective	47.8
Don't know	17.7

Two are the most significant findings when it comes to leadership among Tajikistani Uzbeks. While there is a significant degree of variation within the Uzbek community, the official leadership has de facto marginalized alternative voices. Second, despite a de facto hegemony over Uzbek discourse, the official leadership has proved ineffectual over the years and has eventually all but imploded. Earlier chapters have shown that Uzbeks are not a monolithic bloc. This is why leadership matters. Attention to agency and leadership (personality and elite groups) helps us highlight the rifts, and the different interests and agendas of the many power groups within the Uzbek community and the eventual emergence of some actor who may coalesce and mobilize the community. At present, this type of actor does not exist. Second, the presence of leaders who articulate the demands of the masses is essential for the success of the mobilizational process. "Inertia" seems to define Tajikistani Uzbeks at the moment. A weakly institutionalised organization and a lack of national cohesion have been accompanied since the second half of the 1990s by a state of near collapse of the existing organizations and the practical fragmentation thereof among the regional branches. The few leaders have unclear strategies and even less clear tactics to achieve them. The Uzbek community in Tajikistan has gone through a process of gradual, but steady internal fragmentation and marginalization from public life. The lack of capable and effective leadership has played a role in the process of increased marginalization of Uzbeks from public life, where no-one is left to articulate their demands or represent them.

7.4.2. Kyrgyzstan

Participation to public and party life

The level of participation in public life is low among the Uzbek population. The Uzbek population is particularly wary of exposing itself and tends to privilege engagement in business activities to political activities. Only 14.8% of respondents

declared membership of a political party. Of those who did, almost all were members of the newly established Party of National Unity and Concord. In line with research on the weakness of political parties in Central Asia, party affiliation does not appear to be a relevant factor shaping individual preferences.

Table 7.10 Are you a member of a political party?

Yes	14.8
No	85.2

Table 7.11 What factors determine your voting behaviour?

Factor	%
Nationality	14.6
Place of origin of the candidate	12.2
Capacity/Quality	46.3
Party affiliation	3.7
Don't know	20.7

Political preferences appear to be determined by the qualities and capacity (*delovoye kachestvo*) of the candidate, whereas nationality seems to play little role. This appears a controversial finding, as it is partly disproved by follow-up individual interviews where given the choice between Uzbek and non-Uzbek candidates, Uzbek respondents show little doubt and opt for the former. It seems that the question of capacity comes into play when two or more candidates are Uzbek; at that stage voters may start considering other factors. Considering that the Party of National Unity and Concord, though still untested in national or local elections, is widely believed to be an Uzbek party, it will be interesting to see how it performs in the 2005 elections. Anyway, the fact that Kyrgyzstan's political parties, more than a decade after independence are still predominantly mono-ethnic with minorities experiencing difficulties in finding their way in a Kyrgyz political party is illustrative of the ethnicization of Kyrgyzstani politics, where (pseudo)democratic procedures are often perceived by minority groups not as an instrument for them to achieve representation, but as a tool in the hands of the ethnic majority to legitimise its dominant status. Involvement in cultural events (ie festivals of Uzbek language, theatre rehearsals, concerts) is higher, as confirmed by the fact that three in four respondents indicated taking part in cultural events organized by the local Uzbek organization(s). However, only about half of the respondents attends them more or

less regularly, whereas there is a significant number of respondents who rarely or hardly ever participate.

Table 7.12 Do you take part to cultural events organized by the local Uzbek organization (i.e. theatre, music festival, etc.)?

	%
Yes	73.3
No	26.7

Table 7.13 How often do you take part to the activities organized by the local Uzbek cultural organization?

	%
Always	26.4
Sometimes	28.3
Rarely	5.7
Hardly ever	39.6

Attitudes towards cultural centres

Having established that the level of public involvement among Uzbeks is at best mixed, I then explored in more detail the reasons for this phenomenon and looked at the attitudes of ordinary Uzbeks towards their leaders and their organizations. Findings convey an image of a heterogeneous community, a small segment thereof espouses the orientations of the official leadership. There is a significant portion however which does not wish to be associated with either organization, though they may trust individual leaders. The level of involvement in cultural events organized by Uzbek cultural centres may be misleadingly interpreted as an indicator of support of the population for cultural centres. This is not the case, as the tables below show. About one in two respondents is not a member of any Uzbek cultural organization, whereas one in three appears to be member of the UNCC. The Society of Uzbeks appears less popular, although further survey data point to the fact that an organization's popularity is not synonymous with the leader's popularity. The level of support broadly follow membership lines, though this should not have been taken for granted.

Table 7.14 Are you a member of an Uzbek cultural organization?

Organization	
UNCC	35.9
Society of Uzbeks	6.3
Neither	51.6
Other	6.3

Table 7.15 What cultural organization (if any) do you support?

Organization	
UNCC	30.0
Society of Uzbeks	6.7
Neither	63.3

Uzbek organizations are not perceived as effective. In fact only a very small percentage indicates the UNCC and the Society of Uzbeks as very effective in dealing with Uzbek demands (4.3% and 7.1% respectively). By contrast two in three respondents have a very critical view of these centres, which may explain the low level of both support and membership. Moreover, the very purpose of such organizations is also questioned. In most cases cultural centres are associated with smaller nationalities, possibly non indigenous. Uzbeks tend to show uneasiness to be associated with these, as they emphasise their indigenousness and attachment to the territory. Being associated with a cultural centre would imply, in other terms, acknowledging that "Uzbeks came from somewhere else", like Germans or Koreans, and that in the end it would be legitimate to ask them to leave a country they do not belong to. The reasons for joining such organizations range from the desire to improve the conditions of the Uzbek community (22.6%) and fight discrimination (7.5%), to the belief that it is duty of every Uzbek to be actively involved in organizations aimed at the protection of Uzbek language, culture, and traditions (60%). Surprisingly, in light of the comments discussed in section B, respondents tend to consider Uzbek cultural organizations as necessary (83.2%).

Table 7.16 How effective are the UNCC and the Society of Uzbeks in dealing with Uzbek demands?

	UNCC	SocUz
Very effective	4.3	7.1
Effective	20.0	27.4
Not really effective	49.6	47.8
Not effective at all	26.1	17.7

Table 7.17 Why did you decide to join it?

	Kyrgyzstan
Duty of every Uzbek	60.3
To fight discrimination	7.5
To improve conditions of Uzbeks	22.6
Other	9.7

Table 7.18 Are national-cultural centres necessary to the Uzbek population?

Yes	No
83.2%	16.8%

Respondents were asked to indicate a possible reason behind the lack of political involvement and/or interest, let alone action, of the Uzbek community. Mentality (social conservatism), which Tajikistani Uzbeks have also indicated as the main source of the population's passivity, is indicated by one in four respondents. It seems instead that a lack of leadership (46.7%) is considered as a plausible explanation. In a way, this is in line with findings from Tajikistan, where the absence of available leaders is lamented by local Uzbeks. It is interesting to note that this is not the case in Kyrgyzstan where leaders, even if self-proclaimed ones, are definitely not a scarce resource. The fact that one in two respondents ascribed Uzbek passivity to the lack of leadership indicates the level of dissatisfaction with the current available leaders, who, it seems, are not perceived as such.

Table 7.18 How do you explain the low level of political action among the Uzbek population?

	%
Lack of interest	6.7
Lack of leadership	46.7
No need, complete agreement with authorities	6.7
Mentality	23.3
Economic interests prioritised over political ones	16.7

Perceptions of leadership

The two tables below show the level of trust in and popularity of some of the most well-know personalities within the Uzbek community. The most trusted and popular figure by far is Davron Sabirov. Not only is Davron Sabirov the most popular among the current deputies at the national parliament, but he is also indicated as the most

suitable person to lead the Uzbek cultural centre (which he used to chair until he broke away in 1996-1997). He is also indicated as worthy of sitting in the parliament and worthy of re-election, whereas some other 'big names' in the Uzbek community, such as the UNCC leader, enjoy far lower support.

Table 7.20 Trust in and popularity of local Uzbek personalities[214]

Name	Who should be the leader of the UNCC?	Who should be re-elected in the national parliament?	Who deserves to be member of the parliament?
M. Mamasaidov	87	178	104
B. Juraev	39	139	78
D. Sabirov	181	362	174
A. Sabirov	83	234	60
I. Abdurasulov	29	-	189

Table 7.21 Popularity rating of deputies of the People's Assembly (of Uzbek nationality)[215]

Deputy	No. of hits
Juraev B.	2414
Mamasaidov M.[216]	1993
Sabirov A.[217]	2617
Sabirov D.[218]	2732
Kuchkarov E.	1890

The fragmentation of leadership which most respondents ascribe to personal ambitions and interests rather than to real ideological differences is one of the defining characteristics of the Kyrgyzstani Uzbek community. As many indicate this factor as a cause for the lack of mobilization, it is not surprising that most wish the two organizations to merge (84.4%). By doing so, it is hoped, personal interests will

[214]The questions were: 1. MMMni kim boshqarishi mumkin? 2. Kimi qayta Oliy Kengash saylash mumkin? 3. Kim Oliy Kengash deputaligiga munosib? Survey conducted from Alliance-Press in the Osh area, June-July 2003.

[215] Survey conducted by Alliance Press, June-July 2003. These data have been kindly passed to me and are here reported in agreement with Al'yans Press.

[216]Mukhammadjan Mamasaidov is rector of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek university in Osh and head of the republican (country-wide) Uzbek National-Cultural Centre.

[217]Alisher Sabirov and Davron Sabirov are not related.

[218]Davron Sabirov is head of the break-away Society of Uzbeks, chair of the Osh branch of the state company 'Kyrgyz Gas', and in all but officially owner of Mezon TV and formerly of Mezon newspaper.

be put aside for the sake of the advancement of superior interests, those of the Uzbek community as a whole, not just those of one or two of its ambitious leaders. Unity and cohesiveness come first and foremost in the priorities of members of the Uzbek community.

Table 7.22 Should the Society of Uzbeks and the National-Cultural Centre merge?[219]

Yes	No
84.4%	15.6%

From the state perspective a sort of tactical alliance between these two groups of actors is not an optimal scenario as this would present a unitied Uzbek front voicing grievances and demands. A divided group is certainly more amenable to control, as it has been the case over the past fifteen years (though control is clearly not the only reason for continued Uzbek support of the ruling elites). There are reasons to believe, however, that this scenario is not likely to materialize in the foreseeable future.

[219] *'O'zbeklar Jamiyati bilan O'zbeklar MMMni birlashtirish kerakmi?'*. Sample: 540 respondents.

7.5. Conclusion: Is there an Uzbek agenda?

In this chapter I have disaggregated the unit of analysis (the Uzbek community). Rather than looking at it as an amorphous and undistinguished bloc I examined the internal dynamics and identified the main actors within the Uzbek community. This has shown that rather than speak of a single Uzbek agency one should more appropriately speak of a multiplicity of agencies. The chapter suggests four main findings.

First, leadership matters. Among the most crucial differences between Uzbeks living in the two countries is the type of leadership shown by the elites of the two communities. In short, Uzbeks have shown two opposite forms of leadership: lack of leadership tout court in Tajikistan, and leadership fragmentation in Kyrgyzstan. Inevitably regional and personal factionalism has made the situation of too many leaders unsustainable and the Uzbek community has split between Osh and Jalalabat, and within Osh itself. Ironically, different causes have led to an identical outcome: inefficacy of the Uzbek leadership.

Second is the importance of intra-elite power struggle over access to and distribution of power and resources. National policy has been the prism through which the struggle between elite groups can be interpreted. On the eve of the Soviet collapse the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan showed some strong similarities. More than a decade after independence these strong similarities remain: perceptions of a weak national leadership on the one hand, and pervasive fragmentation of the country's political, economic and social life along regional lines on the other.

Third, findings suggest that the Uzbek community, in both countries, is far from monolithic. That the Uzbek community is represented as one cohesive unit is a process of social construction which largely distorts reality. There are different groups with various interests and agendas. What is resented by ordinary Uzbeks is that these disagreements and discussions are shown to the outside world, whereas unity, especially the formal appearance thereof, is a key feature of Uzbekness. Paradoxically this has turned Uzbek discontent not so much towards state authorities, but against their own leaders, whose authority is contested, not publicly, but in private conversations. Unity is a myth that Uzbeks themselves are striving to re-vive,

blaming the personal ambitions and interests of the leaders (however corresponding to reality). While the political landscape among Tajikistani Uzbeks appears less variegated, political orientations in Kyrgyzstan are better articulated. What is crucial is that official organizations and leaders are not exhaustive of the attitudes and perceptions of the Uzbek community. Regional fragmentation has led to inactivity among Tajikistani Uzbeks, whereas regional fragmentation has emerged as a consequence of ideological as well as personal feuds among Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.The lack of a cohesive leadership is not without implications for the mobilizational process. Zoltan Barany (2002) has emphasised the importance of a united leadership and organization for successful, sustained and effective political action. The more divided a community is or appears, the less likely it is that it will develop a coherent and cohesive, let alone successful political action. This appears to be the case, with intra-Uzbek factionalism dominating the Uzbek public discourse more than any debate over how to realistically achieve what appears to be by and large common goals.

Finally, there is an apparent un-coupling between elites and ordinary people. Leaders, where available at all, seem to follow their own course of action and are perceived as self-referential, leading elitist organizations more interested in dealing with authorities than promoting and channelling demands coming from within the community. Although not completely ineffective (by contrast, Uzbek leaders in Kyrgyzstan have "all done their part", separately[220]), Uzbek leaders are seen as puppets in the hands of the central elites, engaged and fully participating in the intra-elite power struggle at a national level, and more concerned with marginalizing alternative voices coming from within the Uzbek community. There is a significant segment of the Uzbek population that does not wish to be associated with the official leadership or state authorities that are perceived to be ineffective. How their interests will be channeled in the long term will shape the future trajectories of Uzbek political behaviour and ultimately of state stability. Leaders talk... but *who's listening*?

[220]Some have built schools, other funded universities, others established newspapers and TV stations.

8. CONCLUSION

Opportunities, Leadership and Ideas among 'Uzbeks Abroad'

The study has sought to answer one main empirical question: how Uzbeks living in the post-Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have adjusted to being "at home abroad". It has done so by comparing the process of ethno-political mobilization in the two countries, paying special attention to the forms and strategies adopted by the Uzbek community.

How best to capture the conditions of the Uzbek population living in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan? Do they find themselves "at a cusp" between two nationalising and marginalizing states (Liu, 2002), or are they rather beginning to start feeling part of the civic community similar to an increasingly larger part of the Russian diasporas, as Kolstø has observed (1999, 2000)? To some extent both views are correct. The strategies adopted by Uzbeks in their political behaviour, the frames they use, and the complexity of their collective allegiances, cultural as well as political, suggest that they have begun adjusting to their new post-Soviet condition of being citizen of a new polity which is no longer supra-national and is not culturally defined by their ethnicity of belonging or choice (Uzbekistan in this case). The Soviet Union to a large extent provided both. Despite being officially supra-national (socialist) and hindering nationalism, it created and reinforced national divisions. All this clearly changed with independence and the emergence of nationalising states in Central Asia. Domestic and external factors combined to channel (or funnel) Uzbek mobilization in the direction of choice of the country of residence. This should not be interpreted as a sign that all problems have been solved or that demands and grievances have been addressed in any sort of definitive way. The increasingly authoritarian tendencies and the narrowing of a space for autonomous political action have, over the years, further restricted the possibilities for groups to channel their demands and possibly their dissent. The politics of memory keeps alive the thoughts

of when Tajikistan used to be "hetero-directed" from Moscow via Tashkent, and from Tashkent via the elites in the north. Similarly, about fifteen years later, the pains of the Osh conflict remain fresh and continue to haunt the local population. The result of these memories combined with the widespread use of authoritarian practices by the ruling regimes in the region have had the effect of both mobilising and de-mobilizing the Uzbek community. Out of both genuine concern (that conflict may repeat itself) and strategic calculation Uzbeks began to side with the incumbent owing to fear of any potential successor. The next section summarises the main arguments of this study, and is followed by a broader consideration of the prospects for state-group relations in the near future as well as an outline of the key theoretical and methodological contributions this research has sought to make.

8.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN ARGUMENT

8.1.1. Framing Uzbek mobilization

A study of the frames ("interpretive schemes that condense and simplify a person's experience by selectively highlighting and encoding certain situations, objects, events and experiences", Gorenburg, 2003 p.11) that group leaders have adopted to define the condition of the Uzbek communities in either country and the extent to which, along with the time frame during which they resonated has shown that only a particular set of frames, with the notable exception of a brief nationalistic frame in the case of Osh's Davron Sabirov in 1997-2000, have been articulated and have resonated across the Uzbek population.

Nationalist-oriented frames have emerged periodically for short intervals and have been overshadowed by more conciliatory ones. Whilst in the early and late 1990s in Tajikistan such frames have arguably played little role in the conflict that opposed the northern province to the rest of the country, nationalist frames have emerged in southern Kyrgyzstan among local Uzbeks, in the early 1990s (before and in the immediate aftermath of the Osh conflict), and later on in the decade. These frames have not resonated across the political imagination of the Uzbek population who have by contrast appropriated integrationist frames. This does not mean that grievances are not widespread or that they do not matter in the process of Uzbek

mobilization. An analysis of demands and grievances shows that cultural issues have been a core concern of the community, which has remained systematically dissatisfied with the response of the state. Issues of language, education and information have been articulated by local leaders and have resonated across the population. However the Uzbek question has been framed by the leaders of the community within a discourse of indigenousness (in both cases), that alongside the articulation of demands advanced the image of civic integration of the Uzbek community in the new polity. Because of the overarching role that the memory of conflict has played in both countries integrationist and civic frames have resonated across and have been appropriate by the wider Uzbek community. The emergence of such frames also emphasises the significance of the common Soviet legacy. The language adopted by the Uzbek elites to mobilise the community and to frame Uzbek issues is rooted in the Soviet experience and discourses on internationalism and inter-ethnic harmony. They also build on Soviet nationality policies (outlined in chapter 2) where Uzbeks express utter rejection for labels such as diasporas and minorities. In Soviet times these terms were associated with diminished cultural rights at the very best, and possibly with the experience of the "enemy peoples", those ethnic groups deported for their alleged disloyalty to the Soviet state. Claims are made instead on the basis of Uzbek indigenousness or even titularity, for some. Being local, in short, means being able to aspire to a higher status and access to resources. Being "from somewhere else", by contrast, is associated with marginality.

Different frames have alternated in Kyrgyzstan and the increase in activities and mobilization have corresponded to the presence of a competition between the two frames and particularly the resonance of the nationalist one. A particularly useful concept has been Ukudeeva-Freeman's "mobilizing idea", which she defined as "[...] an action-oriented set of beliefs that unifies people around itself for a common goal" (2003 p.99). The emergence of a set of ideas around which the community can coalesce, Ukudeeva-Freeman suggests, is an essential pre-requisite for group mobilization. The trajectory of mobilization (i.e. a confrontational or amicable type of mobilization) largely depends on which of these frames resonate across the population. A crucial argument of this study has been that ideas are quintessentially relational. The same set of ideas can be used to either mobilise or indeed de-mobilise

the population. For this reason I argue that the concept of mobilising ideas should be accompanied by that of de-mobilizing ideas. The concept of de-mobilizing idea (a set of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes which shape the direction of mobilization towards integration with the institutions and other groups of the country of residence), not only disputes the commonly held expectation that political mobilization is by its way confrontational with authorities, but has also helped emphasise how depending on the use the framers decide to make of it, a particular set of frames can simultaneously act as powerful "mobilizer" in one direction, and demobilize the very same group in a different respect. The examples of past experiences of conflict, but also of Islam appear particularly appropriate to illustrate the way mobilization and de-mobilization can be activated by the very same idea. One the one hand Islam constitutes a potentially powerful mobilizing idea (religion), while at the same time representing a constraining force for mobilization along ethnic lines (as an anti-national or supra-national ideology). The memory of the Osh conflict constitutes an additional example, where the politics of memory can either activate the population on the basis of grievances and perceptions of discrimination or – as it has happened – de-mobilise it on the grounds that Uzbeks have been marginalized from the political process (increasingly perceived as either a Kyrgyz or a Tajik affair), hence political mobilization would yield no practical effect. While frames may explain the trajectory of mobilization of the Uzbek community, it is only by paying attention to leaders' strategies and choices and the way they relate with the potential followers that a complete picture of Uzbek mobilization emerges.

8.1.2. Uzbek actors, leadership and strategy

An analysis of Uzbek agency has pointed to four main findings. First, leadership matters. As mentioned earlier in this study, leaders are "strategic decision-makers" that "inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands and influence outcomes" (Morris and Staggenbrg, 2004 p.171). It is the contention of this study that attention to types and strategies of leaders can enhance our understanding of Uzbek ethno-political mobilization. Apparent lack of mass mobilization cannot be explained by apathy or lack of political opportunities alone. Instead, Uzbek mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and

Tajikistan is the product as much of elite strategic calculation as of the structural context. The main goal of Uzbek organizations and the Uzbek community at large revolves around the promotion of some core interests (language, education, representation etc.). How best to achieve them has been the terrain upon which intra-Uzbek contestation has taken place. The defense and promotion of Uzbek cultural interests, a commonly shared objective, has traditionally been associated with the support for the current state leadership. Concern that this leadership may be replaced by more nationalist-oriented actors has shaped Uzbek strategy as essentially "risk-adverse". Stability at all costs has defined the Uzbek strategy since independence. It remains clear that the enthusiastic support of the early days for the Akaev administration and to a lesser extent the Rakhmonov administration has not waned. What has made a difference is that Uzbek leaders have framed the current situation as preferable to any other alternative and that this strategy has been accepted, at least until very recently, by the wider Uzbek community.

Second, the Uzbek leadership now resembles a "microcosm of repression", where different actors compete for attention not (just) of the Uzbek community itself, but of state leaders. Greater visibility and recognition would enhance the status of organizations and individual leaders, thereby diminishing other potential challengers in what in practice is a competition for status, positions and influence as well as a struggle to have one's demands met. This has generated the situation where instead of open debates or even open conflict over the appropriate strategy, whoever is in position of power dominates the discourse and seeks to marginalize and de-legitimise the other, as either nationalist (various intellectuals and young graduates in both countries, but also Davron Sabirov in Kyrgyzstan) or irrelevant (ie Uzbek women who are also active members of NGOs, but whose voice in politics is particularly feeble).

Third, as the discussion on leaders-followers relations suggest, the former are seen as increasingly ineffective in advancing Uzbek interests. Signals of dissatisfaction with the Uzbek and state leadership were already evident in the early 2000s in Kyrgyzstan where the progressive un-coupling of elites and followers within the Uzbek community started to become apparent. Regime and group leaders, to whom credit goes for having framed the post-Soviet transformation preserving

inter-ethnic stability (the former) and for having framed Uzbek mobilization in a non nationalist and non violent way see their legitimacy increasingly eroded. The political capital they accumulated in the early stages of independence is about to vanish, even if cases of open contestation have thus far remained limited to a few sporadic cases (e.g. Aksy riots in March, 2002. Chapter 7 has shown that the position of the group leaders should not be taken for granted. This does not bode well for the stability of the regime. How long that will refuse to open up will bear crucially on the stability of the state. Given the importance that minority groups have assumed for the stability of the regime over the past decade or so, a further alienation of ethnic minorities would leave the regime's power base narrower. Integration rather than reliance on a narrower power base is the more urgent (though unlikely in the short run) way out of the current impasse.

Finally, despite the hegemonization of the public discourse in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan one should more appropriately refer to Uzbek actors, since Uzbeks are far from being a cohesive group. This has emerged both in chapters 4 and 7. A key difference that has emerged with regard to the two case studies. While similar structural and ideational factors have shaped Uzbek mobilization, attention to agency has allowed the detection of variation between the two. This is a difference in degree rather than kind, though and can be explained by the presence of a more articulate leadership among Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks and the corresponding absence of any form of leadership in Tajikistan. Though this does not mean that Uzbek actors are absent in the country, a collapse in the national leadership, structural regional divisions in the country and intra-Uzbek heterogeneity as to how best to promote Uzbek interests have left the community in a state of semi-paralysis in recent years. This contrasts with the situation in Kyrgyzstan, where higher levels of organization of Uzbek collective actors and the emergence of more vocal individual actors have made intra-Uzbek debate livelier, though not necessarily more interesting to the ordinary population.

8.1.3. Uzbekistan's role

This study also suggests a lack of support from the ethnic patron (Uzbekistan) for Uzbek co-ethnics abroad. In fact, after an initial involvement in the neighbours'

domestic affairs (particularly Tashkent's meddling with the Tajik civil war from 1992 to 1994), Uzbekistan has restrained from supporting Uzbek communities in the neighbouring countries. While the possibility of Uzbekistan's support for Uzbeks abroad has often been indicated as one of the de-stabilising factors in the region, little evidence has been provided to justify this claim. Overall, if anything, Uzbekistan has played a stabilising role in this respect. This, it was argued, can be ascribed to three main factors.

First is the emphasis that Uzbekistan has placed on state-building and the concept of *O'zbekchilik* (Uzbekness). Compared to other ethno-national groups in the region, Uzbeks presented a comparatively higher degree of national consciousness. Strengthening the state, its institutions, identities and security, has certainly been an ambiguous and contradictory process, but the practical effect has been a stabilising effect on Uzbekistan's attitude towards Uzbeks abroad. Given Tashkent's propensity for unilateral solutions to regional problems, one would have in fact expected a higher degree of involvement from Uzbekistan in the domestic affairs of its neighbours. With security concerns paramount and the construction of a public discourse that sees Uzbekistan as a "fortress" encircled by a series of threats to the integrity and stability of the state, the country's leadership has severed its links with Uzbek co-ethnics in the neighbouring republics. Suspicion towards the Ferghana Valley Uzbeks is particularly acute in Uzbekistan, due to the alleged association between the profound religious sentiment of the valley's dwellers and their involvement in militant activities. Occasional incursions by Islamic militants over the years (from the Adolat and Islom Laskharlari in the early 1990s in Namangan and Andijan to the 1999 and 2000 IMU insurgencies) have been constructed as the presentation of an Islamic face. While there is no doubt that Uzbekistan has faced mounting opposition and threats to stability (Horsman, 2005), there is no sign that that this has a distinctively ethnic Uzbek mark. Nonetheless the Islamic threat, imagined or real, by and large informs Uzbekistan's Weltanschauung and its relationships with the neighbours.

A second possible factor for Uzbekistan's reluctance in dealing with Uzbeks abroad, lies in the priority given by Uzbekistan to inter-state bilateral relationships. Not only has Uzbekistan eschewed any form of regional arrangement and shown

wariness towards any collective security regime, the regime of Tashkent has also systematically ignored any request for direct relationship with the organizations of Uzbeks abroad. Uzbek co-ethnics, Uzbekistan's President Karimov has often maintained, are citizens of other countries and therefore it is their responsibility, not Uzbekistan's to deal with their demands (and I suppose similar conclusions should be drawn with respect to Uzbekistan's Tajik minorities, for example). Related to this aspect is the tacit agreement that exists between the region's regimes. A support for one's own co-ethnics could, with all probability, ignite the region, causing a domino effect of support for co-ethnics beyond state borders. The region would soon descend into chaos.

A further explanation for the lack of active links may be found in the views of Uzbeks abroad themselves. All the political, economic, and cultural limitations and problems notwithstanding, Uzbeks living there have enjoyed a limited degree of pluralism. At the very least, authoritarian control and repression have not reached levels anywhere close to those perceived to be the norm in Uzbekistan. The current political situation in Uzbekistan does not appear particularly appealing to Uzbeks abroad. A liberalization of the political climate in Tashkent might exert a greater appeal to Uzbeks abroad, but at the moment the more open political, economic and cultural environment in countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan does not suggest any move for migration, let alone requests for annexation to Uzbekistan. As a leading figure of the Uyghur minority in Tashkent put it clearly to me[221], given the current conditions, "no-one is interested in coming to Uzbekistan... the reality is that all those who can, leaves it!" One should also note that their sense of civic belonging (to the states of residence) is increasing. Expectations are rising vis-à-vis Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani authorities, but this, I argue, supports the view that Uzbeks now accept their permanent status as citizens of these new republics.

Overall, this has set Uzbekistan apart from other post-communist states like Russia[222], Kazakhstan, Hungary or Serbia which have actively supported co-ethnics abroad, militarily (Serbia) or through repatriation policies (Kazakhstan). The case of

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[221]Interview held in Tashkent, 8 June 2003.

[222]I am clearly aware of the distinctiveness of the Russian case, where the Russian diasporas are descendants of colonial settlers, whereas in the Uzbek case, co-ethnics have been diasporised by the movement of borders. This, however, does not detract from the possibility of drawing comparison between the political behaviour of the alleged ethnic patron towards co-ethnics abroad.

the relationship between Uzbeks abroad and Uzbekistan suggests that the latter does not think of the former as a community it has a responsibility to protect. As Gorenburg has correctly noted (2001), although the motherland may be calling, the "diaspora" may not be listening. In light of this, it seems necessary to qualify Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus framework as a way to conceptualise the relationships between state (of residence), minority, and alleged 'external homeland'. While no doubt some among the Uzbek population may continue to look to Uzbekistan as a cultural homeland, or a country with whose citizens they may have special cultural and family bonds, the relationship between Uzbekistan and Uzbeks abroad appears much weaker than the one, say, between Russia and Russians abroad.

8.1.4. An ever narrowing space for Uzbek ethno-political mobilization

Overall the path undertaken by Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani authorities has converged since the mid-1990s and until the recent developments in March 2005 that have led to the ousting of Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan. Initial openings notwithstanding, which took place in the context of regime weakness corresponding to the initial phases of regime formation (collapse of previous order, institutional weakness, search for legitimacy, conflict prevention) where broad cross-ethnic alliances were formed out of necessity more than enthusiasm, the consolidation of autocracies in Central Asia has made the regime's reliance on minority groups (so crucial in the early 1990s especially in Kyrgyzstani politics) less central to domestic factional politics. Kyrgyzstani politics has become to a large extent a Kyrgyz affair. Similarly Tajikistani politics has turned into a Tajik-affair. The "others" (Russians and Uzbeks especially) have become ever more peripheral as they have come to be less necessary to the regime strength and stability. How has this affected the legitimacy of the regime and the position, status, and legitimacy of the group's leader whose political capital lay essentially in their political proximity to the "king's ears"?

Chapters 4 and 5 have confirmed the significance of context as a set of constraints and opportunities which not only shapes the course of Uzbek mobilization, but gives meaning to it (as is clearly shown by the way post-Soviet frames are built in the Soviet nationality policies). The study of variations in the POS has been particularly important in understanding how small changes in authoritarian

countries have led to the opening of possibilities for dissent and contestation, and more broadly the development of contentious politics. After an initial opening of the window of opportunity (the most pluralistic societies in late Soviet Central Asia), such windows were abruptly closed by an increasing tendency to authoritarianism which came to define the post-Soviet transformation in both countries[223]. Spaces for dissent and more generally for autonomous (not state-driven, funded, or arranged) political action became narrower and narrower.

Structural preconditions and the political opportunity structure certainly shaped the course of Uzbek political mobilization by making some choices available, but not others (both in organizational terms, such as the ban on ethnic parties, as in terms of strategies, such as granting Uzbek official language status). The impression that Uzbeks faced overwhelming structural barriers to successful mobilisation is correct. Context, as Colin Hay has noted, is structurally selective, and defines the ranges of strategies available to agents. By privileging some courses of action over others, state actors in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have increasingly restricted the chances for minority groups to mobilise and the forms that such mobilisation might take.

At the same time the study has also shown that there are limits to what a structural model can achieve in non open political systems. Problems arise when trying to make sense of the variation within and between the two cases or when looking for suitable methodological tools. Other sets of factors provide a more convincing explanation than structural accounts. This is in line with analogous arguments made by scholars of Islamic activism in non open societies, such as Wiktorowicz (2004) and Smith (2004). An important insight from the social movement literature lies in the attempt to look beyond traditional forms of political organizations, which in the case of ethnic mobilization naturally means ethnic political parties. Cultural organizations are the main collective agents and vehicles of Uzbek political mobilization and therefore they are the actors one should look at. At the same time, it is only by looking at how the condition of the community is framed and the strategies adopted by the leaders that one can fully understand the logic behind Uzbek political behaviour

[223]See Spector (2003), Huskey (2002) for research on Kyrgyzstan's authoritarian turn, and Atkin (2002) for a similar analysis on Tajikistan's "weak authoritarianism".

8.1.5. Beyond ethnic vs. civic: Uzbek identity is both

A broader consideration follows from the discussion on the ties between Uzbekistan and Uzbek co-ethnics abroad. The dichotomy between ethnic and civic conceptions of nation and the implications thereof for post-Soviet state-building has been a primary concern in scholarship on post-communist Eurasia. To different extents all the Central Asian states have been categorised to fit into the category of nationalising states, defined by Rogers Brubaker (1996) as states of and for the nation after which the republics were called (titular nation). It has not been my intention to dispute this categorization - which I largely agree with - given the emphasis on practices more than policies that state authorities have given to the necessity of enhancing the status of the titular group. However, the study has emphasised that a dichotomy of ethnic and civic is not always useful. To some extent, data seem to support Taras Kuzio's (2003) critique of the dichotomy, where he argues that similarly to the Western European case all states have to pass through different stages, from an initial more ethnic idea of nation to a more civic one. While I am not convinced by the linearity of the process, I argue that both views can and do co-exist in the same polity. This is clearly not without contradictions, and these contradictions deeply affect the way minorities can be accommodated and possibly integrated as full members of the citizenry.

The case of the Uzbekistani state points well to a condition where both conceptions are present in the regime's approach, and where policies aimed at strengthening the state have been accompanied by others which have privileged the Uzbek community to the detriment of non-Uzbeks. The study of the Uzbek case contributes to a more nuanced understanding of nation-building in Central Asia, which does not rely on a focus on the condition of a particular group situated within the eponymous republic. Deprived of formal and informal policies and practices to support and enhance their position in a given state, how do minorities relate to the new state of residence? Additionally, a discussion of Uzbek self-perception and mobilising frames (chapter 4, but also 6) has shown that Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have adopted multiple and overlapping forms of loyalties. Depending on the specific context, one may or may not emerge as dominant, but the crucial point is that different forms of identifications are not perceived as exclusive. Data suggest

that Uzbeks are increasingly aware of their national identity, which accompanies, but does not replace or supersede civic allegiance. Uzbek national identity is not found to be detrimental to other forms of loyalty. Quite the contrary, when asked to rank different forms of identity, state identity tends to be the form of identity adopted. Alongside national, state, and supra-national identities, research found that local loyalties retain their importance too. Attachment to the locale, the proximate territory, is particularly evident in southern Kyrgyzstan. Local Uzbeks do not see any problem with multiple allegiances and the overlapping nature thereof. Uzbekness is a very diverse form of identity, which encompasses many regional variations, and in this it is no different from Italian, or Spanish identity, where regional variations are also strong. Being Uzbek means different things to different people, and these need not be mutually exclusive. This points in both cases the picture of an Uzbek community less cohesive than perhaps originally envisaged and often assumed. This confirms not just Gorenburg's observations with regard to the Russian-speaking communities in the former Soviet space, that the various Russian diasporas may not be speaking with one voice, but also Barany's thesis that the lack of group cohesiveness translates in the lack of a critical social capital for collective mobilization. While Uzbeks in Osh, Jalalabat, Bishkek, Khujand, Dushanbe and in the outskirts of these cities undoubtedly share a sense of commonality and all perceive themselves to be Uzbek, their degree of attachment to nationality tends to vary significantly across regions.

8.2. PROSPECTS

While one should not be tempted toward excessive generalizations from an analysis of two case studies, the research invites some broader considerations on the dynamics of political transformation and change in post-Soviet Central Asia:

- the fragile and eroding bases of regime legitimacy in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan;
- and the need for political reform and a broader societal integration before the unaddressed demands and grievances slip out of hand.

How minorities react to the nationalising policies and interact with state institutions tells us a lot about how far the latter have gone in integrating or

accommodating the non-titular groups and how these imagine themselves in the new states. In other words, to use Walker Connor's crucial distinction, state-group relations and particularly a study of minority groups can highlight the degree of legitimacy enjoyed by the state, the regime, and the government (Connor, 2004)[224]. The reason for this was that the urge for legitimacy which, not deriving from an independence struggle framed as a national liberation from the Soviet imperial yoke (as happened in the Baltics or Georgia, for example), had to be sought elsewhere.

The search for legitimation, popular or self-granted, has become a key concern for the state leaders who, unlike elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, cannot boast participation in anti-colonial and independence struggles. Void of any popular legitimation arising from an independence struggle, the post-Soviet elites have been forced to look elsewhere. This has been a contradictory process, the very ambiguity of which is becoming all the more evident. On the one hand the post-Soviet elites have portrayed themselves as guarantors of inter-ethnic stability, harmony and of minority rights (especially in the case of Askar Akaev and his ideology of Kyrgyzstan our common home). On the other hand domestic factionalism has forced the leaders to deal with competing power groups from within their ethnic community (Kyrgyz or Tajik). The necessity to negotiate and agree with those groups has come at a price: the marginalization of ethnic minorities. The most troubling findings concern (1) the eroding legitimacy of state and group leaders and (2) the narrowing space available as outlets of collective grievances and demands, product of the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the region's regimes. The restrictions imposed on the means and outlets for airing views have contributed to the general sense of apathy and distrust of institutions across the whole citizenry. If this has been balanced by persisting concern for political successions and the implications thereof in terms of more nationalist-oriented policies, then there are signs that the consensus and legitimacy that the regime has enjoyed since independence is eroding.

The apparent un-coupling of leaders and followers does not bode well for Central Asian transformation. Data suggest that ordinary citizens feel increasingly detached and less represented by their leaders. Thus far open contestation has been

[224]Though, because of the personalistic and authoritarian nature of the Central Asian regimes, the difference between government and regime legitimacy appears blurred.

limited to sporadic cases. Episodes such as the 2002 Aksy events and the riots that took place in northern Tajikistan between 1997 and 1998 have fortunately been the exception rather than the norm. The consequences of a lack of reform and openness on the one hand (linked to the elites' primary consolidation of power position and status) with an illusory legitimacy on the other have already started to radicalise the ordinary population left with no other channel to voice its demands with the only effective mobilising structures operating underground: radical islamic organizations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb-ut Tahrir. I have not conducted research specifically on those movements or on the popularity they enjoy among Uzbeks (they are often associated with the Uzbek population, among the most traditional in the region) and non Uzbeks alike. The sense is that the persistence of closure is creating the very threat the regimes are dreading. The only alternatives appear the establishment of an open society and the integration, rather than the exclusion or marginalization of the 'other'.

While the issue of the legitimacy of the current state leadership has begun to be an object of study (Atkin, 2002; Cummings, 2002a; Huskey, 2002), the significance of the regime-group leadership nexus for regime stability has been neglected overall in scholarship. Neil Melvin (2001) and Pauline Jones Luong (2002) have noted how the Kyrgyzstani leadership has relied on a divide and rule approach to establish its dominance and consolidate its position. To this end the support of minority groups have been of critical importance. The Uzbek community's support for the Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani regimes has been a trademark of the first decade (and more) of transition. Data from this research and reports from the region indicate that this should not be taken for granted any more. Though the Uzbek community's general integrationist stance is not in doubt, the lack of progress of Uzbek leaders (indeed their perceived inefficacy) and the lack of response from the authorities to cultural and political demands suggest that Uzbeks may be starting to withdraw their "blank cheque" to the state administration. It is far too soon to advance any hypothesis as to what path post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan will decide to take with regard to state-minority relations. The fact that unlike 2002 (Aksy events) the Uzbek community has more actively sided with southern (Kyrgyz) political factions and more broadly the "opposition" suggest that the risk-adverse strategy has been

significantly reviewed. How the "new leaders" will respond to Uzbek (and other minority) calls is likely to shape Kyrgyzstan's immediate and long-term future and stability. Broader societal integration is among the most pressing issues facing the post-Akaev authorities.

8.2.1. Contributions and suggestions for future research

This study has attempted to contribute filling in a gap in the literature on ethnic mobilization in at least three areas. First, scholarship on the topic has thus far paid marginal attention to post-communist Eurasia, with the notable exception of an expanding body of literature on the Russian diasporas[225]. This study has provided an in-depth empirical investigation of two cases often referred to in the literature (Melvin, 1998 and 2001; Bohr, 1998; Hunter, 2001; Olcott, 1994; especially Khamidov, 2000-2005; Tabyshalieva, 1998 and 1999; Gretsky, 1997; Khudonazarov, 1997; Liu, 2002; Megoran, 2002d), but rarely subject to separate investigation.

This study has also adopted an innovative approach to ethno-political mobilization (strategic-relational approach). It has built on the important insights of Beissinger's research on late Soviet nationalist mobilization (most crucially the importance of the dynamic interplay between structure, agency and ideas), and Jessop (1990) and Hay's (2002) conceptualizations of a SRA to political analysis to develop a theoretical framework to explain the strategies and forms of Uzbek mobilization. And third, such an approach with its emphasis on the actor's strategic capacity has allowed me to shed light on the rationale behind the choices of the Uzbek community in both countries over the period from 1991 to 2003. Why widespread grievances have not turned conflict potential into actual conflict can only be understood by shifting the attention from structure to agency and ideas – frames, specifically - and how these feed back into structure.

Finally in terms of directions for future research three issues seem to be awaiting investigation. First is the broad question of the "silent dogs" of nationalism. This can be done both through a comparative research strategy which looks at a larger number of cases, both across and within countries. Looking at two cases, however illustrative of broader tendencies, is a clear limitation of this study. Adding

[225]Exceptions to this include Foltz (1996) and Horsman (2001) on Tajiks, Gorenburg on minority mobilization in Russia, 2003), and more recently Atabaki and Mehendale (2004).

further within-country and cross-group cases would show the degree of interaction between the state and different groups. Second is the relationship between minority groups and civil society, in particular the use that such groups make of NGOs as vehicles for social and political participation (as these may be seen as more effective channels than state ones) as well as instruments for influencing the state itself in an indirect way. A third and final path for future research was opened when this research was close to completion. The quick demise of the Akaev regime raises the question of how Uzbeks and other minority groups will respond to this sudden change in the political opportunity structure. This rapid and still confused process offers challenges and opportunities to researchers on ethno-political mobilization and state-building in post-communist Eurasia and (first and foremost) to all the parties in the country.

CHAPTER 9
Methodological appendix

This chapter discusses some methodological questions in addition to those already outlined in chapter 1 and wherever appropriate throughout each of the following chapters. Hereafter I first outline the sources used and the methods adopted to collect and analyse data during and after fieldwork. I then turn to ethical and practical issues, namely the role of the researcher working on sensitive topics, conducting research in difficult settings, and the choice of language in which research was conducted. Samples of the questionnaire used in the survey and of the topic guides used during interviews and focus groups in the three countries are listed at the end of the chapter.

9.1. General methodological questions

Field research was conducted over a period of seven months between Winter 2002 and Summer 2003. This first stage of the study, conducted in Uzbekistan during November and December 2002, aimed at understanding how the local population related to Uzbek co-ethnics living outwith Uzbekistan and the latter's policies towards them. In this phase I relied on the works of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov, daily media or other national publications in order to make sense of the official policy of the state. History books offered interesting insights on how state ideology is being predicated across the younger strata of the population. I also conducted a number of individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups in two different cities of Uzbekistan: Tashkent, which lies at the very centre of the regime's modernization project, where attention and resources are concentrated; and Samarkand, a city in many respects radically different from Tashkent, as not only it escapes official attention, but it is traditionally home to a multi-ethnic population, where ethnicity has very little meaning for the way Samarkandis perceive themselves

(Schoeberlein, 1994). Respondents included members of the local cultural elite (academics, graduate students, local experts), as discussed in chapter 5. On completion of this first stage I returned to Edinburgh to process my preliminary data and prepare for the following – and central – phase, which took place from May to August 2003 in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The stay in Uzbekistan was designed to conduct some further interviews with local experts in order to make the findings of the previous visit more robust. I then turned to the two case studies, the second of which (Tajikistan) replicated the format adopted in Kyrgyzstan.

Small-scale surveys

First, a small-scale survey was conducted. It was administered by myself in Kyrgyzstan, whereas for time constraints I relied on the Centre for Democratic Transformations in Khujand for administering it on my behalf in Tajikistan[226]. I conducted further surveys and individual interviews in parallel, while the survey was being conducted. The survey comprised 136 respondents in Kyrgyzstan and 137 in Tajikistan. Because the sample is both too small in size and sampling techniques were non-random no claim to statistical representativeness is made here. However every effort was made to gather a sense of various social and geographical groups, so that it is possible to draw an impression of broader trends. Aggregate figures can be broken down as follows.

Table 9.1 Disaggregation by area

Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Bishkek: 8	Khujand: 39
Tokmok: 1	Sughd (not incl. Khujand): 63
Osh: 61	Dushanbe: 35
Osh province (not including Osh city): 10	
Jalalabat city: 11	
Batken: 45	

[226]The Centre of Democratic Transformations is an NGO based in Khujand which conducts its own empirical research as well as assists foreign organizations and/or individual researchers in conducting research in Tajikistan. While the organization is based in Khujand it relies on an extensive network of contacts elsewhere in the north of the Tajikistan and in Dushanbe.

Table 9.2 Sex

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Male	86	91
Female	50	46

Table 9.3 Level of education

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Medium	53	32
Higher	79	104
No answer	4	1

Table 9.4 Elite/non-elite

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Elite	91 (political: 25; economic: 19; cultural: 47)	73 (political: 27; economic: 16; cultural: 40)
Non-elite	45	54

Table 9.5 Urban/rural

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Urban	81	74
Rural	55	63

Table 9.6 Age bands

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
1(<21)	11	2
2(22-43)	78	69
3(44-68)	45	65
4(>69)	2	1

The questionnaire comprised an average of thirty questions and was administered in Russian. After conducting a pilot study in Bishkek in early June 2003, I then re-visited the format of the questionnaire (as well as the type of questions to be asked in the follow-up interviews) to take into account issues that the preliminary findings had shown were relevant to the local Uzbek community (including phrasing of questions as well as topic areas to be addressed). Questions covered five main issue areas: Personal details (place of birth and residence, age, education, profession); attachment to various type of identity (ethnic, state, religious, local, regional); identification of specifically Uzbek problems and evaluation of political, economic and cultural conditions of the Uzbek population in the republic; identification of homeland, self-perception as member of ethnic minority (or else); attitude towards state of residence and perceptions of effectiveness of various institutions in dealing with Uzbek issues; attitude towards Uzbekistan (assessment of policy thereof towards Uzbek co-ethnics; desire to migrate there); participation to and interest in Uzbek organizations.

For obvious reasons some questions appeared in one country only. In Tajikistan respondents were asked about the perceived discrimination from state authorities vis-à-vis the northern province and in case to indicate what they believed the rationale behind this was (ie regional, ethnic or other motivations). In Kyrgyzstan questions focused on the dualism between the two Uzbek organizations and the respondents' perceptions on the matter. Survey data were then coded into and analysed through SPSS 11.5.

Semi-structured elite interviews and focus groups

While I do believe that survey data contributed to make the findings more robust and give an idea of broad trends, working in Central Asia relying on quantitative data only presents inevitable limitations, exposing research findings to crucial weaknesses. Deniz Kandiyoti (1999) has noted how standard indicators commonly used to measure poverty may not be suitable to understand the specificities of Central Asian societies. Similarly, familiarity among the respondents with some of the concepts and indicators (to measure them) adopted in the survey may not be widespread, or consensus may not be established on what a term precisely means.

This weakness of quantitative methods can be balanced through extensive and in-depth fieldwork where the researcher gets to know the meaning that local respondents attach to concepts. While I could not count on time and financial resources to conduct an even more extensive ethnographic study, I did rely on qualitative semi-structured individual interviews to explore perceptions, attitudes and beliefs with regard to particular events or processes. As table 9.7 shows, 29 individual interviews and 7 focus groups (comprising 29 respondents) were conducted in Uzbekistan. Follow-up interviews also took place in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with members of the local Uzbek elite to discuss the findings that emerged from the survey and explore additional issues such as individual involvement in public life, leaders' actions and strategies and popular perceptions thereof.

Similarly to surveys, interviewing also faced the issue of sampling. With regard to this I adopted a snowballing technique in order to overcome the problem. Snowballing is a particularly useful way to gain access to social groupings where other more common techniques to do so are unavailable (electoral rolls, phone directories). Because access to the group is granted through an insider the group's perception of the researcher as alien can be significantly reduced. There are obvious downsides with this technique as well, such as the risk arising from respondents pointing to other potential informants whose views they share – thereby creating a bias through the elimination of potential alternative or marginal views. I sought to tackle this risk by relying on as many gatekeepers as possible, so that chances for group-thinking would be minimised. This proved a successful strategy as a wide range of views emerged during the interviews and surveys.

I conclude with a note on focus groups, a relatively new technique in political science (Harrison, 2001). I made use of this method during my visits to Uzbekistan to explore how local Uzbeks make sense of their identity and *O'zbekchilik* (whether this is a concept with ethnic or state-based underpinning) and how they relate to Uzbek co-ethnics abroad. While I am satisfied with the quality of data gathered, I became increasingly concerned about two issues. Focus grops are extremely difficult to organise (arranging for a time and venue suitable to participants) and this process can be time-consuming. Also, because the presence of a dominant figure in the focus group can derail the whole enterprise, eventually the advantages presented by

individual interviews, adopting a semi-structured format (a topic guide allowing for variations in order of questions and for a degree of control by the interviewee – should he or she consider one issue more relevant than another) led to a preference for this method over focus groups. Interviews and focus groups were recorded on a small tape recorder, after constent had been established, and data were later transcribed. In all cases guarantees for anonymous and confidential use of personal data were ensured.

Table 9.7 Interviews and focus groups

	Interviews	**Focus groups**
Total	**109**	**7 (29 respondents)**
Uzbekistan	29 (in Tashkent, in Samarkand)	7 (3 in Tashkent, 4 in Samarkand)
Kyrgyzstan	50 (9 in Bishkek, 7 in Jalalabat, 34 in Osh city)	-
Tajikistan	30 (23 in Khujand, 7 in Dushanbe)	-

9.2. Ethical and empirical issues in field research

Language

As mentioned earlier in this study I began to familiarise myself with Central Asian languages in 2001, before starting my doctoral program. The question of what language research would and should be conducted in is a central concern in designing and conducting research. For the purpose of this study I relied primarily – though not exclusively - on the Russian language. On the surface this could appear a counter-intuitive choice: after all, research on Uzbeks, partly conducted in Uzbekistan could well be conducted in the Uzbeks' own language. I do not dispute the validity of this claim, and in fact during my stay in Uzbekistan I tended to rely more on the use of the Uzbek language, though with the invaluable help of an interpreter, as I did not feel confident enough to proceed alone. This also contributed to making me re-consider the choice of language in a way that allowed me to conduct research independently (the implications of relying on a third party, however reliable, also played a role). There are two further events that helped me make up my mind. During my 2003 visit to Uzbekistan I was asked to lecture on nationalism issues at the "Academy under the President of Uzbekistan" in Tashkent under invitation of the

then Tashkent office of the Open Society Institute. The event brought to my attention how consensus among the local Uzbek audience would soon be reached over the meaning of central concepts in nationalism studies in the Russian language (nationalism, nation, self-consciousness), but not in Uzbek, where endless discussions followed over which term would best capture the English or Russian equivalent. Furthermore, Uzbekistani authorities have actively promoted the use of Uzbek language, and hence the familiarity of almost all ethnic Uzbeks with the Uzbek language, Uzbeks abroad have by contrast had to deal with nationalising policies aimed at enhancing the position of Kyrgyz and Tajik, but not of minority languages. Additionally, countries like Kyrgyzstan are culturally more Russified than neighbouring Uzbekistan. This has meant that on some occasions members of the local Uzbek elites were more fluent in Russian than in Uzbek. Therefore I resorted to conducting research in Russian for purposes of comparability of the two cases, using for example questionnaires in Russian language and conducting interviews in Russian as well.

The relationship between researcher and researched: Research on or for national minorities?

This research has addressed a politically sensitive topic. The study has focused on marginal groups and attention from an outsider in an authoritarian setting might have put them in danger, if not physical, possibly psychological, due to increased or undue attention. A period of pre-doctoral research in Uzbekistan in Summer 2001 taught me a great deal in terms of how to approach the study of the conditions of the 'ethnic other' in a non open political system[227]. During my research I always maintained an open and honest approach, making it unmistakable who I was and what I was doing. The only occasion on which this approach "backfired" was in the Spring of 2003 when I naively informed the authorities in Uzbekistan that I would need to visit the country again as part of my research on cross-border minorities. Unsurprisingly, my visa application was rejected at the time and it was only thanks to

[227]I must make clear that I am decisively unhappy with this terminology which assumes the fixation of only one type of identity to the detriment of others, and which in the end is un-necessarily confrontational.

the intervention of the Open Society Institute in Tashkent that I would be able to go back to Uzbekistan over that summer.

There are also broader considerations arising from conducting research *on* ethnic minorities, particularly with regard to the relationship between the research and the researched. While ethnic or religious self-awareness may be on the rise among some elements within ethnic minorities in the region, an excess of attention may be counter-productive and eventually turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nick Megoran has rightly commented on the excesses of analysts, international organizations and even some scholars in emphasising the conflict potential of the Ferghana Valley region (2000). Undue attention may ultimately de-stabilise the situation because of the emphasis on a particular security discourse. This also applies to research on ethnic identification, as respondents were asked to think of themselves in ethnic terms, even though in some occasions they made clear that ethnicity was of little relevance to them (chapter 4).

Additionally, research conducted on ethnic minorities should lead the researcher to greater reflexivity in how he or she is conducting research. Laura Adams very insightfully discusses this in her reflection on her experience as a "mascot" researcher during fieldwork in Uzbekistan (1999). Though distinct (I tended to alternate living in my own flat with living with local families – both Uzbeks and non), Adams's experience reminds me of my condition of being approached by some members of the Uzbek community as their advocate. I remember my conversations with the editor of the Uzbek-language newspaper Tong in Khujand in August 2003 about the difficulties that the Uzbek community has experienced in Tajikistan since independence. At some point he mentioned the perceived imbalance in treatment from the Tajikistan office of the Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) towards the various ethnic communities living in the Sughd province in light of the decision to fund Russian and Tajik language newspapers, but not the Uzbek language one. Mirzo-aka, and with him some others among the local community, asked me to go the Dushanbe office of the OSCE and inquire on their behalf about this. This forced me to consider my status as researcher. Was I conducting research *on* or *for* ethnic minorities? I often felt expectations from members of ethnic minorities that would require a

higher degree of involvement than perhaps a researcher should have had. Certainly empathy and sympathy were never lacking on my part, but how far should one go? When does one stop being a researcher on ethnic minorities and become a researcher for them? This also had its downsides, as it occurred to me – rarely I must say – that officials from state authorities belonging to the titular group would look at me with some degree of suspicion as if I were trying to spot some error from their side. I 'solved' the issue by being as open as I could about the nature and scope of my research and about my commitment to report back my findings once research had been completed.

Researching sensitive topics in post-conflict environments

The Tajikistani is a post-conflict society, where civil war has left scars, physical as well as psychological. Similarly southern Kyrgyzstanis experienced a brief, but bloody conflict in June 1990 which – as explored in chapter 6 – has shaped the way local peoples relate to public life and mobilize politically. In Osh, for example, the local population were not eager to discuss openly and freely the origins and aftermath of the conflict, which is still in many respects an "open wound". From my previous visits to Kyrgyzstan, and to Osh in particular, I had the impression that this is still very much a "taboo topic" for southern Kyrgyzstani people, regardless of their ethnic background. In light of this, I adopted an indirect approach to explore the salience of the Osh conflict in the mindset of both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. I did not address the question directly and did not raise the issue myself. This clearly prevented me from having a larger sample covering different views, beliefs, and perceptions on this specific question. What I did instead was much more a *semi-structured* approach to interviews, so that whenever the Osh conflict was mentioned by the respondent himself/herself without being elicited I allowed the conversation to flow and memories to re-surface. This meant that respondents at times did not refer to the conflict to make sense of the way Uzbeks have behaved throughout the whole post-independence period. Even when simply declining to discuss the question further, the respondents' attitude was significant to show how deeply entrenched the memories still are. In addition, I also relied on more informal conversations with

members of the Uzbek community, during which the topic emerged and was discussed.

Terminology – cities and country names

Because names of cities, regions, and even historical figures have changed – at times radically - since the Soviet collapse, choosing which term to use has not just been a matter of convenience, but also a political choice. I opted for remaining as neutral as possible, adopting the official name of cities, provinces and countries. Hence, I used the term Khujand as opposed to a more Uzbekified – and as common – Khojent, Jalalabat reflecting Kyrgyzstan's recent official change, and not a more Russified Jalal-Abad. However I use Tashkent and Samarkand and not Toshkent and Samarqand, simply because the previous spelling is the international one and these two cities are internationally known using that spelling. Similarly I opted for Osh (international and country spelling), and not O'sh (Uzbek) and Sughd, rather than a less common - though closer to the original pronunciation - So'g'd.

Appendix 1. Sample questionnaire (Kyrgyzstan)

1. I am a member of X (specify) nationality
2. My nationality is very important/important/neither important nor not important/not important/absolutely not important
3. I feel only Uzbek/more Uzbek than Kyrgyzstani/equally Uzbek and Kyrgyzstani/more Kyrgyzstani than Uzbek/neither/only Kyrgyzstani
4. How often do you identify with one of the following (always, sometimes, rarely, almost never): Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kyrgyzstani, from the Ferghana Valley, southerner/northerner
5. To which of the following do you feel closer: Uzbek nationality/my city or village of origin/state of residence/region/Ferghana Valley/other
6. What is your passport nationality?
7. What is your homeland? (Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan/Central Asia/Ferghana Valley/city/region/none/other)
8. How would you refer to your national community? (diaspora/national minority/titular nation/historical nation/ethnic community/other)
9. What type of influence does Uzbekistan have towards Uzbeks living in the neighbouring states? (Positive/negative/don't know/does not make any difference)
10. Does Uzbekistan defend the interests of Uzbeks living in the neighoubouring republics? (yes/no/don't know)
11. What is Kyrgyzstan to you?
12. Who should protect the rights of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan? (the Kyrgyzstani state, Uzbekistan, International organizations, Uzbek organizations in Kyrgyzstan, all Uzbeks living in Kyrgyzstan, all citizens of Kyrgyzstan, other)
13. How effective are the following institutions to deal with Uzbek-related issues (very effective, effective, not really effective, not effective at all)? Administration, parliament, Uzbek NCC, Society of Uzbeks
14. How effective is the Uzbek organization(s) in dealing with political, economic, cultural qurstions (very effective, effective, not really effective, not effective at all)?

Appendix 2. Topic guide for interviews and focus groups in Kyrgyzstan[228]

Opportunities and discrimination: What types of obstacles to participation do Uzbeks face, if any? Are they subject to discriminations? Are opportunities equal for all ethnic groups in the public and private sphere?

Self-perception: What term would you use to refer to the Uzbek community? Are they a diaspora? Or a minority?

Attitude toward Kyrgyzstan: What is Kyrgyzstan to you? How do you view the role of the administration in dealing with Uzbek questions? Who promotes and defends Uzbek interests in Kyrgyzstan?

Attitude towards Uzbekistan: What are your views about Uzbekistan? Does Uzbekistan have a policy towards Uzbeks living in the neighbouring republics, or should it have one? If so, why? If not, why not?

Mechanism of mobilization: What mechanisms of mobilization are available to Uzbeks? Do you find them effective? What form of state control are they subject to? How does mobilization function during elections? Should there be Uzbek political parties? Are cultural centres necessary to Uzbeks?

Uzbek Organizations: What are your views about the local Uzbek organizations? Are they effective? What about their ties with the state?

Leadership: Can you tell me how you became involved in this acftivity? What did you do before that? What did you do during the Soviet period? What are the main problems/challenges facing the Uzbek community? How do you think they should be addressed? Who are the leaders within the Uzbek community?

Perceptions of leadership: Who are the leaders within the Uzbek community? Why do you refer to them as leaders? Are they effective? Do you share their goals and

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[228]This guide is indicative of the topics regularly discussed during interviews in both Kyrgyzstan and, duly modified, in Tajikistan. Because the format was semi-structured, the order in which questions were posed could vary according to the circumstances. Additional questions which appeared relevant to the particular interview could also be added. Appendix 2 contains the topic guide with sample questions discussed during fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan. The topic guide for Tajikistan differed only in that some questions addressed issues that were applied to that country only (legacy of the civil war; change in the balance of power between regions; rationale behind the marginalization of the "north" from Tajikistani politics). The same applies with regard to the choice of presenting the questionnaire used in the survey in Kyrgyzstan.

strategies? How could they be more effective? What issues are most relevant to Uzbeks?

Appendix 3. Sample topic guide for interviews and focus groups in Uzbekistan

Are Uzbeks living outwith Uzbekistan of concern to Uzbekistan? Should they be?

Should Uzbekistan support more actively Uzbeks living in the neighbouring Republics?

What do Uzbeks in Uzbekistan have in common with those living in the neighbouring republics?

Are the part of the same (Uzbek) nation? What distinghuishes them from Uzbekistani Uzbeks?

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Acronyms

AO: Autonomous oblast' (province)
ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
GBAO: Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast'
GRP: Gross Regional Product
HDI: Human Development Index
HPI: Human Poverty Index
MGA: Morphogenetic approach
RSFSR: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SRA: Strategic-relational approach
TaSSR: Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic
UzSSR: Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic

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